



The LEWIN GROUP

Employment Services and Employer Interaction in Colorado Works Programs

Prepared for:

State of Colorado Department of Human Services

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EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EMPLOYER INTERACTION IN COLORADO WORKS PROGRAMS

HIGHLIGHTS

Welfare reform in Colorado and nationally is work-centered. National welfare reform legislation in 1996 replaced the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children program with the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which has stronger work requirements for individuals and specific work participation goals for state programs. The underlying assumption is that through employment, individuals and families can become economically self-sufficient, thus breaking the culture of public dependency. States have flexibility to design their TANF work programs, establish work requirements for recipients, and balance employment, training, and education approaches. In Colorado Works—the state’s TANF program—the responsibility for structuring and delivering employment services and the manner in which the programs interact with and react to the local labor market lies with counties and their Departments of Social Services (DSS). This report describes employment services in local Colorado Works programs, particularly strategies that involve interaction with employers and industries, highlighting approaches that may be of interest to other counties.

The following are a few of the major observations from the field discussed in the report:

There is no one ideal structure for delivering Colorado Works employment services. In 10 of the 18 counties visited, DSS handles the Colorado Works employment components in-house. When the work component is handled by an outside entity, the provider is usually the local Workforce Center (WFC), generally under contract from DSS. Some counties use other outside contractors for employment services, such as Goodwill Industries or a community college, and some counties have multiple employment contractors. No single model or structure seems necessarily “better” than another. What is important is that the program has staff or contractors with employment expertise on labor market conditions, occupational demand and skills requirements, and business practices in addition to expertise needed for other important activities such as life skills instruction, employability assessment, barrier identification and alleviation, family and social services, and income maintenance processing.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** In some counties, the emphasis on assessment and barrier alleviation appears to dominate employment-specific objectives such as job placement, job development, occupation-specific skills development, or employer relations. When consistent with a county’s Colorado Works Plan, it might be beneficial for agencies that are handling the employment activities to review and ensure an appropriate balance between supportive and family services and actual employment.

The WFCs are major partners in Colorado Works in most places. When the local WFC is not the formal Colorado Works employment provider, DSS or its other partners generally has referral procedures or arrangements for TANF clients to access job training or to use job listings. But in a number of counties, the use of WFCs is limited and the interaction between Colorado Works programs and WFCs is minimal. In some places, staff on both sides indicates there is little involvement in part because the agencies have different missions, including the fact that some WFCs focus mainly on higher-skilled workers and meeting employer needs.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** There are usually employment, labor market, and industry resources at WFCs that can help all job seekers, including TANF

recipients. Access to publicly-available WFC services, most of which are funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Wagner Peysner Act, could be improved in some counties to take better advantage of the resources even if the WFC is not a formal Colorado Works partner or if organizational “philosophies” are very different.

The most common employment-specific activities in the counties visited are (1) job readiness workshops that generally include some guided job search activity, and (2) work experience, variously referred to as Community Work Experience Program (CWEP), Alternative Work Experience Programs (AWEP), or internships. Both job readiness instruction and work experience operate in all 18 counties visited, as well as job search instruction, life skills training, career planning, employment assessments and coaching during actual job search. In many places, education or training is also incorporated into the job readiness components (usually basic computer skills training), or GED or ESL classes. Individuals in CWEP or other work experience programs are, at a minimum, expected to continue searching for regular jobs while in the work assignment. Some county programs have more extensive employment development offerings, such as occupational training in high demand sectors, work-based education and training, or formal internships that transition into regular employment.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** There are some potentially promising models for systematically integrating education (basic education, computer skills, and two-year post-secondary courses) into CWEP or occupation-specific training, usually through colleges, and often blending funds from WIA, Pell Grants, and TANF. To the extent possible, it makes sense to engage employers or industries in customizing training.

There is great variation in the job readiness components in terms of the emphasis on employment and job search. In over half the counties, especially those that have long job readiness components (4-12 weeks); the primary focus is assessment of barriers, career and occupational interest identification, employability planning, and life-skills instruction. A few counties have shorter group job readiness components.

- **Operational implications and considerations:** Some job readiness components could be strengthened by expanding the focus on labor market information, existing job opportunities, occupational exploration, and job placement services, without compromising the emphasis on assessment of barriers and needs.

In some counties there is specific job development for Colorado Works participants, while in other counties, the emphasis is on self-directed job search. Counties where the work component is delivered by an outside contractor or provider are more likely to have Job Developers for Colorado Works. Where there are Job Developers, they tend to focus mainly on developing public and non-profit agencies to serve as work experience job sites. In places where the Colorado Works employment services are administered by the WFC or another employment organization, the regular WFC job development activities often encompass Colorado Works as they do all programs in the WFC.

- **Operational implications and considerations:** Some employment service components could incorporate more job development to complement self-directed job search.

One impressive feature of a number of Colorado Works programs is development of extensive networks of employers. In at least four counties there are extensive networks of employers for work experience or CWEP components. Some networks (in metropolitan and urban areas) have

over 100 employers willing and prepared to serve as work sites for TANF clients. There are fewer examples of promising interactions and partnerships with private sector employers. In general, urban programs operated by WFC or other employment organizations have special job developers or employer representatives who obtain job listings and, in some places, work with Colorado Works case managers to match job seekers with employers.

- **Operational implications and considerations:** Developing networks of employers willing to serve as work experience sites may be desirable in some communities to ensure an adequate number of worksite “slots” for the mandatory TANF population. Some counties may wish to consider ways to adapt the concept more specifically for unsubsidized private sector jobs. In rural areas, large networks of employers are not possible, but some rural counties have adapted similar employer arrangements to their labor markets, working, for example, with public agencies, health centers, or correctional facilities and preparing and screening TANF recipients for specific occupations.

Several Workforce Boards (WIBs) and WFCs are in the process of identifying growth industry sectors and establishing partnerships for those sectors. As a major partner, DSS often participates in these sectoral initiatives. However, in many counties, the Colorado Works program is not integrally connected to existing employer or industry partnerships.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** It may be difficult in some places, but it may make sense for Colorado Works to become part of multi-agency employment or economic development collaborations. Usually the impetus for such partnerships locally is to encourage new business or economic development, and some WFCs may not view TANF recipients as an asset in recruiting new businesses. There are examples of this happening, though, and it is worth closer consideration, even in rural areas with few TANF cash assistance clients.

Numerous examples of potentially promising employment strategies in the counties visited are described in the report, some of which are noted below.

Selected Examples of Potential Promising Employment Strategies

Work Program Structure:

- Differentiated employment services contractors with performance based payments: Adams County DSS (p. 9)
- Rural interagency on-line and satellite workforce development services: Yuma County (p. 9)
- Facilitated interagency planning and case services: La Plata County Colorado Works Partnership (p. 10)
- Co-enroll most TANF clients with the WFC: Boulder, Fremont, Larimer, Mesa, and Weld Counties (p. 22)

Special Populations:

- Special DSS worker for cases with special service needs: Boulder County Social Case Worker (p. 11)
- Summer jobs program primarily for TANF youth: Larimer County Operation Occupation (p. 12)
- Program for non-custodial parents that includes job services: El Paso Parent Opportunity Program (p. 13)

Training- and Career-based Employment Components:

- Subsidized paid public sector jobs with training: Larimer County Transitional Employment Program (p. 21)
- Conversion of CWEP to OJT with commitment to hire: Huerfano County (p. 21)
- Training-based work experience: Arapahoe County Community Based Training (CBT) Program (p. 22)
- Social Purpose Enterprises for work experience: Work Options for Women (cafeteria) and Safari Seconds Thrift Store in Denver (p. 23); and Blue Horizon Thrift Store in Saguache County (p. 24)

Education for Career Development:

- Education-focused Colorado Works Program: Bent and Garfield Counties (p. 15)

Employment Incentives:

- Cash incentives to clients for job search and obtaining employment: Saguache DSS CHEERS program (p. 25)
- Job retention vouchers for services and merchandise: Weld County Retention Packages (p. 26)
- Cash incentives for job retention: Fremont, Garfield, La Plata, Larimer, and Mesa Counties (p. 26)

Post-Employment Programs:

- Post-Employment Career Development for TANF leavers and low-income working families: Adams County Job Success Program, Advancement Plus (A+) and CHOICES (p. 26)

Employer Engagement:

- Employer Networks for Colorado Works CWEP: Arapahoe, Jefferson, Larimer, Pueblo, and Rio Grande Counties (p. 27)
- Employer partnerships for training for occupations and sectors in demand: Warehouse Certification Training program (Caterpillar Construction, Adams County DSS, Thornton One-Stop, and Front Range Community College); Denver Employment Readiness Certification Course (developed with employer input for health, hospitality, protective services, business services and energy high demand jobs) (p. 29)

I. INTRODUCTION

Welfare reform in Colorado and nationally is work-centered. At the national level, the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA) of 1996 replaced the former cash assistance program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children and its Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program, with the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. PRWORA placed time limits on lifetime cash assistance provided with federal funds and imposed stricter work participation requirements on states. PRWORA also increased the flexibility that states had in designing their TANF programs, deciding how much of the federal funding is used for cash benefits, employment services, supportive services, and other activities. One result is that there is a great deal of variation in TANF programs across states.

Colorado's TANF program, Colorado Works, is administered by the Colorado Works Division, Office of Self-Sufficiency, within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). The state has a long tradition of local control of programs and, as a result, the state's 64 counties have a good deal of autonomy in the design and implementation of their Colorado Works programs. This level of county control is due, in large part, to the diversity within the state and ensures that local policies target the specific needs of residents.

In Colorado Works the responsibility for structuring and delivering employment services and the manner in which the programs interact with and react to the local labor market lies with counties and their Departments of Social Services (DSS). This report describes employment services in local Colorado Works programs, particularly strategies that involve interaction with employers and industries, highlighting approaches that may be of interest to other counties.

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has contracted with The Lewin Group and its partners—the University of Colorado's Health Sciences Center (UCHSC), the Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Policy Studies (JHU), and Capital Research Corporation (CRC)—to perform an in-depth study of the Colorado Works program. The objective is to provide administrators with information about program strategies and approaches being used in various counties that others might find useful for improving program implementation, performance, and outcomes. The study's design was developed by the Lewin team in consultation with CDHS officials and an Advisory Committee that includes representatives of the counties and Colorado's advocacy community.

As part of the study, the Advisory Committee chose topics for in-depth examination. The research team is producing reports on each topic. The special topics reports are:

- Strategies for assisting the hardest-to-serve clients who face barriers to employment such as disabilities or lack of education, or are otherwise in need of special services or professional resources.
- Coordination and collaboration between county Colorado Works programs and other human services programs and partners.
- Employment services used by counties to encourage employment, job retention and career advancement; and relationships with employers and industries that Colorado Works programs have developed.

- Family-oriented and preventative services such as interventions to keep families from entering the child support system, youth initiatives, and fatherhood programs.

The topic reports draw on research conducted since the evaluation’s start in January 2005. Key data sources include a survey of counties, site visits to selected counties, and analysis of administrative data.

The survey, administered in the summer of 2005, asked county directors about their agency’s activities and operations and their county’s policies. Follow-up phone interviews were conducted with nearly all county directors or their designees, providing a more in-depth understanding of topics covered by the survey, and giving directors an opportunity to discuss interesting policies and practices they wanted to share with other counties. Through the survey and the follow-up interviews, the research team documented the diversity of practices employed by human services agencies across the state in administering the Colorado Works program.¹

Site visits were conducted in 18 counties between September 2005 and January 2006. The counties were selected in consultation with CDHS and the Advisory Committee. Counties were chosen that had interesting service delivery strategies and initiatives, and that represented a range of economic and programmatic settings and the different regions of the state. (**Box 1** lists the counties.) During the site visits, interviews were conducted with Colorado Works administrators and program staff, and with representatives of other agencies and nonprofits who serve a significant number of Colorado Works participants or collaborate with the county human services departments. In some counties, the researchers conducted focus groups with program participants. Topics covered in the fieldwork included program structure, case processing, assessments, work participation activities, education and training programs, post-employment programs, supportive services, partnerships, special initiatives, and particular challenges, among others.

Box 1. Counties Where Site Visits Were Conducted	
Adams	Jefferson
Arapahoe	La Plata
Bent	Larimer
Boulder	Mesa
Denver	Pueblo
El Paso	Rio Grande
Fremont	Saguache
Garfield	Weld
Huerfano	Yuma

Finally, the topic reports also incorporate preliminary analysis of statewide Colorado Works administrative data. Further analysis of these data and quarterly earnings reports will be performed for subsequent evaluation reports, but where relevant, data from the Colorado Automated Client Tracking Information System (CACTIS) are included in this report.

¹ Findings from the survey and follow-up call were presented in a report prepared for CDHS. See Elkin, Farrell, Gardiner, and Turner, "Colorado Works Program Evaluation: Findings from County Survey," October 20, 2005.

A. Employment in the Context of Welfare Reform

Employment is a critical objective of national welfare reform.² The underlying assumption is that through employment, individuals and families can become economically self-sufficient, thus breaking the culture of public dependency. In addition to requiring states to ensure that specific percentages of TANF cases participate in work activities, as defined by federal regulation, the 1996 law also requires states to establish work requirements for individual recipients.

More specifically, the federal law includes work-related program goals which all states must meet. All adults on TANF must be "engaged" in work by the time they have received 24 months of TANF assistance (which can include some education and training activities as well as employment in the regular labor market), and states have overall participation rate targets they must meet. States decide what types of activities are acceptable for meeting the individual work requirements, and states decide whether to impose the requirements sooner than twenty-four months. In addition, each state must meet specific program goals related to work participation. Currently, 50 percent of all TANF cases with an adult and 90 percent of two-parent cases are to be working or participating in work-related activities. The federal government allows states to count, each month, those recipients who are actively engaged in a job or are involved in one of 12 legislatively-specified work activities for at least 35 hours a week (or 20 hours a week for parents with a child under the age of 6).

In February of 2006, Congress reauthorized the TANF legislation and made changes that may cause states to reexamine their participation standards policies, but the basic participation rates are unchanged. In June of 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will issue regulations clarifying the definition of the allowable work activities, which were not specific in the 1996 legislation, and addressing the calculation of acceptable hours in determining the state rate. In any case, the emphasis on employment, work-related activities, and work requirements remains a critically important aspect of TANF.

Thus, the federal legislation and the regulations governing state work participation standards focus on in-program activity and employment while on welfare. Many states apply the federal rules to the work requirements they impose on individual recipients, while some states have broader or narrower rules.

Operationally, all states implement work programs for TANF recipients to implement the work requirements and to move individuals from welfare to work. Even before the 1996 federal welfare reform law, all states had work-welfare programs. That is, in addition to implementing the work requirements and ensuring that the state meets its work participation rates, TANF work programs are also designed to achieve employment outcomes (rather than just achieve in-program participation). Employment outcomes include some that are specifically related to individuals (e.g., increases in an individual's employment or earnings) and some relate to

² Employment is not the only objective of TANF programs. "The purpose of TANF as stated in the 1996 law is to "increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families."

programs (e.g., entered employment or job placement rates, average wages of the job obtained, or average retention rates of persons who obtain jobs).³

Following the 1996 federal legislation, many TANF agencies emphasized immediate employment, sometimes referred to as “work first,” designed to move individuals as quickly as possible from welfare to regular employment. Some states intervene even before formal application for benefits, attempting to divert individuals from welfare by helping them find jobs or providing other services that will allow them to avoid welfare. Other states have policies that allow longer-term education or job training, which is expected to improve long-term employability and wage-earning potential. Probably no single program uses any one strategy in a pure sense. Instead, many operational variations exist, and mixed models combine strategies. For instance, some programs combine vocational training with basic skills education, either in the workplace or in instructional centers or classes. Others integrate pre-employment preparation with assignment to jobs in the public or nonprofit sector, along with counseling, treatment, education, and peer support. In many states, all of these strategies operate at once.

In short, states have the flexibility to design their TANF programs to meet state needs and priorities, decide how much to invest in employment services, and determine how much to emphasize education and job training versus immediate employment.

Policy and program discussions about the tradeoff between “work first” and “train (or educate) first” approaches have been underway for over three decades. Many research studies and evaluations have been conducted on welfare-to-work programs and strategies. The body of literature is vast. Some of the key findings as they relate to employment services and strategies are important to briefly summarize:⁴

- Rapid or immediate employment programs (i.e., work first) speed up the rate at which individuals obtain jobs (compared to what participants would have done on their own). This suggests programs can increase participation levels and (usually) job entry rates by emphasizing job search and job readiness components, but average wages and retention rates may be low.
- Education and training programs (i.e., train or educate first) also increase employment (although not as quickly as immediate employment programs), but they do not ultimately lead to better jobs. In part, the limited impacts from education may reflect the fact that the basic skills levels of welfare recipients are generally low, meaning most programs focusing on education emphasize preparing individuals for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED), which may not increase skills enough to result in higher wage jobs.
- Mixed-strategies and work-place based strategies have the greatest potential for increasing employment and earnings. Evaluations of demonstrations have found high

³ Pamela Holcomb and Demetra Smith Nightingale, “Alternative Strategies for Increasing Employment,” *The Future of Children*, Spring 1997.

⁴ See, for example, Holcomb and Nightingale; Julie Strawn, “Beyond Job Search or Basic Education: Rethinking the Role of Skills in Welfare Reform,” Washington DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, April 1998; Gordon L. Berlin, “What Works in Welfare Reform: Evidence and Lessons to Guide TANF Reauthorization,” New York: MDRRC, 2002; and Demetra Smith Nightingale, “Overview of New York City’s Welfare Policies,” in *Managing Welfare Reform in New York City*, E.S. Savas, editor, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2005.

impacts for “mixed strategies” where programs urge some to find jobs quickly and others to participate in work-focused education and training. Some earlier research also indicated more positive impacts from on-the-job training and other workplace-based strategies. This suggests that strategies that are client-focused (based on skills and personal needs) and strategies that combine internships, on-the-job training, employer or industry partnerships, and college certification for a specific occupation might have the most positive long-term effects.

- Large-scale work experience programs can be implemented in urban areas, and can be combined with education, training, and treatment interventions for those with special needs, but require considerable administrative and institutional infrastructure. This suggests that if work requirements are a top priority, programs may have to implement public employment strategies, such as community work experience, and have adequate numbers of worksites to fully enforce the work requirement. If regular employment is also an objective, then programs may have to incorporate employability development, training, or education along with work experience.

Employment services thus play several roles in the welfare system, by contributing to the following welfare objectives:

- Implementing recipients’ work requirements
- Achieving the state’s work participation rates
- Improving participants’ economic outcomes, particularly employment, earnings, and self-sufficiency
- Achieving program employment outcomes, particularly job entry or job placement rates and job retention rates.

In Colorado Works, as in other state TANF programs, employment is an important goal, and as discussed in the following sections, the full range of objectives and strategies exist in local programs across the state. Unlike nearly every other state, the counties in Colorado have the flexibility to design their TANF work programs, establish work requirements for recipients, decide what types of work activities to emphasize to meet the program participation rates, and whether and how to balance employment, training, and education. The extensive range of “work activities” allowed in the program is expected to result in regular and sustained employment, which is considered a necessary step in achieving long-term economic self-sufficiency.

B. Purpose of this Report

This report, one of four “special topic” reports produced as part of a broader study of Colorado Works, examines the variety of employment service strategies used by county programs across the state, particularly interactions with employers and industries. This report addresses the following questions related to employment services and employer interactions:

- What structural arrangements are used to deliver employment-specific services to Colorado Works clients, and what roles do DSS staff play in employment service components?

- What are the highest-priority, or most developed, employment-specific components or services in the counties? Which are less common?
- To what extent are employers and firms involved with Colorado Works programs?

The following sections address each of these questions in order. First, the counties visited are categorized in terms of the ways they structure their work components and activities, including the role of DSS staff and the role of local Workforce Centers (WFCs). This is followed by an examination of the relative priority placed on various employment-specific components, particularly subsidized work, on-the-job (OJT) training, occupational training, internships, and work experience. The subsequent section addresses employer and industry involvement with Colorado Works. The final section summarizes some of the patterns discussed in the earlier sections, highlighting both promising approaches and ways that employer involvement might be enhanced. Throughout, potentially promising approaches are highlighted and, when administrative data are available, evidence of success is presented.

II. STRUCTURE FOR DELIVERING WORK ACTIVITIES

A. General Arrangements

With few exceptions, there are two general models that counties use for delivering (and managing) employment-related services and components in Colorado Works—either the DSS agency provides all (or nearly all) employment services in-house, or DSS contracts with the workforce center to provide all (or nearly all) of those services. In a few places, other employment entities are used, such as Goodwill Industries or community colleges. Past research on welfare and work programs suggests that there is no preferred model, but there are advantages and disadvantages associated with each. Human services agencies that choose to deliver the employment services directly have the advantage of close organizational proximity to supportive services units, such as day care or family social workers, which can improve the work participants’ access to those services when needed. However, since human service agencies generally seek personnel who have human services or income maintenance skills, there tends to be less in-house in-depth experience with the labor market and businesses, except perhaps in localities where these agencies have been delivering employment services for many years.

Workforce agencies, in contrast, tend to have labor market expertise and an understanding of business needs, and nationwide have had some success at helping workers with recent work experience obtain or change jobs. But there is concern that some agencies are not appropriate for unskilled workers. In Colorado, as in most states, the workforce development mission is to maintain a system that is “locally driven and business-led” to meet the projected needs of employers, and also to “provide all Coloradoans the opportunity to engage in productive work.” This mission, therefore, considers two categories of customers—businesses and job seekers. Since workforce development policy is locally-driven, the general mission is carried out differently across workforce areas, reflecting differences in the local labor market, public officials’ priorities, historic partnerships among relevant organizations and agencies, availability of occupational training in high-growth jobs, funding levels, and other factors. Some may be more focused on business needs; others may place as much emphasis on upgrading employability of job seekers. Nationally, as in Colorado, there is often interaction between the workforce centers and public assistance agencies, ranging from informal referral of some public

assistance recipients to the local workforce center for services, to formal and contractual agreements to operate the entire TANF work program.

Regardless of whether DSS delivers all employment services in-house or contracts them out to WFCs or other providers, the key to successfully delivering employment services to cash assistance recipients (who may not have high skills) is to provide high quality supportive services and high quality employment services. In particular, it is important to (1) ensure seamless access to supportive and family services that might be needed, and (2) maintain a realistic approach to interacting with businesses and other employers, particularly in developing unsubsidized and subsidized jobs and occupational training.

In Colorado Works, the county human service agencies decide how employment services for TANF (and other clients) are to be handled. As shown in *Exhibit 1*, in most of the counties visited (10), the human services agency delivers all—or nearly all—Colorado Works services in-house, including all services involved with the TANF intake, benefits, and individual compliance, as well as all employment-related activities. In five other counties, the WFC is responsible for the Colorado Works employment activity, and in three counties other employment agencies deliver the employment services, two of which have a differentiated employment provider network, where DSS contracts with more than one organization to operate employment programs, each with different specialized expertise or services (e.g., serving persons with special needs or barriers, or access to college-based training). In two counties visited, WFC and Colorado Works are both in the county human services agency; the Colorado Works case managers deliver the work component services but are collocated with the WFC staff.

Exhibit 1: Structure for Delivering TANF Work Components in Colorado Works Study Sites

Field Study Counties	DSS-mainly in-house or with a few key contractors	WFC-mainly with a few key other providers	Non-WFC organization(s) provide TANF employment services
Adams			X*
Arapahoe		X	
Bent	X		
Boulder		X	
Denver		X	
El Paso			X
Fremont	X		
Garfield	X		
Huerfano	X		
Jefferson	X (at WFC)		
La Plata			X
Larimer		X	
Mesa	X (at WFC)		
Rio Grande	X		
Pueblo	X (at WFC)		
Saguache	X		
Weld		X	
Yuma	X		

*In Adams, one of the four employment services contractors is a WFC.

In all counties visited, staff assigned to carry out employment services (in contrast to income maintenance and eligibility services) have similar general responsibilities—they lead job readiness workshops, conduct or coordinate employability assessments, help or prepare individual employment plans or responsibility contracts, manage CWEP activity, monitor job search and participation in work activities, follow up with clients as they progress through components and, often, after they obtain employment. Typically, there are also formal and/or informal arrangements with other agencies and organizations for special services such as intensive assessment or testing, mental health services or substance abuse treatment and arrangements with other entities, mainly community colleges, for education and training.

Generally, in the counties visited, DSS and outside contractors, particularly WFCs, seem to follow somewhat different models of delivering employment services. This is not surprising, and tends to follow traditional professional practice in the two systems that have evolved over many decades—neither is necessarily “better” than the other. In general, in counties where DSS handles the work components of Colorado Works, most (but not all) tend to use a *case management* or *broker* approach to employment services, whereas most (but not all) WFCs appear to have what might be called an *employment counselor approach* (although the terms case manager and counselor are sometimes used in both agencies).

For example, DSS work programs tend not to have job developers *per se*; instead designated workers are usually responsible for coaching participants in their job search or identifying or helping clients identify CWEP sites, referring individuals to workforce centers, or arranging for occupational certification training at community colleges. In some places, particularly small and rural counties, the same DSS staff handle all services—from intake and eligibility determination to ongoing case processing, provision of social services such as child care, and managing work activities and employment services. In WFC Colorado Works programs, staff also provide similar services, but in these programs there was more likely to also be some active job development or job placement activity by either the case manager or someone else in the WFC. The job developer(s) may be staff within the center’s Colorado Works unit or in another unit of the WFC; in some places, the WFC Colorado Works staff are “generalists” but their responsibilities might include formal job development—meaning doing active marketing to businesses, service as “account” or industry representatives, or formally taking job orders.

There are exceptions to this general pattern, where DSS staff also perform traditional job development activities. In Fremont County, for example, where the work component is handled in-house by DSS case managers who also handle ongoing cash assistance activities, there is also a special DSS job developer (especially for CWEP site sponsors) who works closely with the participants and case managers.

If DSS staff do not directly provide employment services, the local WFC is the most common contractor (in 5 of the study sites, as also shown above on *Exhibit 1*). In two counties, another agency was the main employment contractor—VESTED (Vocational Enhancements: Services, Training & Education operated by Southwest Colorado Mental Health) in La Plata County and Goodwill Industries of Colorado Springs in El Paso County. Unique among our study sites, Adams County (*Box 2*) contracts with three different organizations to provide employment services in comprehensive programs, with each contractor specializing somewhat on certain populations or geographic areas (differentiated provider network).

Box 2. Differentiated Contractors for Colorado Works Employment Services

Adams County

Adams County contracts with four organizations to provide employment and training services (“case management”) for Colorado Works clients: the Center for Work Education and Employment (CWEE), Goodwill Industries of Denver, the Community College of Aurora (CCA), and the Thornton One-Stop Career Center. After intake, the client is assigned to one of these partners depending on the client’s needs, skills, and geographic location. Each program is different, but all follow the general employment priorities established in the county’s TANF plan, offering access to similar general activities.

CCA and Goodwill also have DSS contracts to operate post-employment retention and career advancement programs, to which all the employment contractors can refer participants.

All contracts are performance-based, with financial payments tied to specific employment outcomes and results.

In counties where the WFC is not formally involved with Colorado Works, DSS staff report that they may refer individuals to the local center to use the resource room or check job listings; in a few places, case managers might refer specific individuals to the WFC for OJT placement. In a couple of counties, the limited interaction between DSS and WFCs may be due to geographic remoteness—DSS staff indicate that when the closest WFC is many miles away, it is not easily accessible to staff or clients. One strategy for dealing with the remoteness issue is being developed in Yuma County, where the DSS and the WFC collaborate to offer an on-line resource center, as described in **Box 3**.

Box 3. Rural Interagency On-line and Satellite Workforce Development Services

Yuma County

Yuma DSS contributes financially to a satellite center in Wray, by funding the WorkNet job readiness and career planning course and the on-line, interactive True Life financial literacy course focused on developing realistic budgets and career goals. Yuma Workforce Center also offers services in Wray, where an employment specialist from the main Yuma WFC comes once a week, and brings job search resources, posts job openings, schedules meetings with clients, and brings everything that is on-line in the Workforce Center to the DSS office in Wray. The employment specialist also does a weekly radio spot announcing job postings.

It is not unusual in Colorado and in other states that WFC’s are not always formally involved with TANF work programs. For many reasons, this might not be the preferred arrangement. For example, the DSS agency may prefer to handle employment services in-house, or the WFC may place its priority on serving employers and the more employable job seekers and not be interested in serving TANF clients. Nonetheless, there are usually important resources at WFCs that can help any job seeker, including TANF clients, such as:

- Public access to computers and copy machines,

- Job listings in resource rooms or on computers,
- Labor market information and analysis,
- Scheduled public workshops on job search, resume-writing or occupational interests,
- Business or industry presentations or hiring sessions,
- Access to training customized for businesses or industries,
- Basic computer skills or other classes routinely offered classes.

In other words, whether or not the WFC is a formal contractor for Colorado Works, the centers can be used. In nearly all counties visited, the Colorado Works program has formal or informal arrangements with the local WFC, and in most places this is a positive interagency relationship. In a few counties, though, staff from both systems indicated that there is little or no involvement, and in a couple of these places, the WFC is in the same town, or even the same building, as the DSS office. In these counties, staff in both agencies indicate that there is only limited interaction between the two units, although TANF recipients can participate in any WFC workshops or activities offered to the public. Even if DSS staff are located near the WFC, Colorado Works clients may not necessarily have any special arrangements for services through the WFC.

There are some strategies that DSS and WFCs use that, according to staff on both sides, appear to improve access to WFC services even when the WFC does not have a formal contract to serve TANF recipients. For example, in Fremont County, all non-exempt TANF recipients must register with the WFC, as well as participate in the DSS employment-led components. In some counties there are formal interagency groups that meet regularly about client services, sometimes discussing plans for cases they have in common. In La Plata's Colorado Works Partnership, for example, all key community agencies and programs, including the WFC, have quarterly meetings, using a professional facilitator, that include joint planning for clients with multiple barriers.

B. DSS Intake and Eligibility Staff Involvement with Work Component

In most counties, the primary responsibilities of DSS intake/eligibility workers are to refer individuals to the employment staff in DSS or an outside provider, exchange information about participation, and initiate sanctions when necessary. Usually employment staff or case managers report participation to the intake or eligibility technicians or workers, and sometimes employment staff (often called case managers) transmit information to the eligibility technicians about individuals who may be subject to sanctions, but DSS staff generally initiate the formal sanction action.

Regardless of the structure for the work activities, there is varying involvement of DSS intake and eligibility workers in the work components, and, except in very small counties, their degree of involvement does not appear to be related to whether or not the work components are handled in-house or contracted out. In the smallest counties one or just a few DSS staff may handle all services from intake through employment, meaning they interact with each other on various issues. In all but the smallest counties, though, some DSS intake/eligibility workers do not interact directly with staff who provide employment-related services, even when the work unit is within DSS (e.g., the work units in at least two counties are actually located at a WFC, not at

DSS, and the DSS work staff have limited contact with DSS staff and limited contact with WFC staff).

There are exceptions, however, where DSS staff—intake/eligibility workers or, in a few places, specially-designated DSS staff—interact with the employment units for more than just routine tracking of hours of work activity or processing sanction requests. A few examples follow:

- A special DSS non-intake Social Case Worker in Boulder County is responsible for coordinating all services, including employment activities, for certain cases such as those approaching the time limit, those with multiple barriers and service needs, and those families jointly involved with child welfare. This senior case worker is also the DSS staff person who has the most personal contact with the WFC unit that administers the Colorado Works work component.
- El Paso County’s Sanction Prevention Team includes work program staff from Goodwill (the work component contractor) and TANF case managers, who conduct home visits and work with families at risk of sanctions to avoid sanctions.
- Fremont County’s DSS case managers are responsible for all work activities as well as ongoing TANF case actions, and they coordinate with a special DSS job developer as well as with the regular WFC on joint participants and employment and training opportunities for specific clients.

While there are many reasons to believe that more interaction between income maintenance and employment staff could benefit individuals seeking employment, there is little evidence from the research nationally that this makes a difference in terms of employment outcomes (although it can certainly make the benefits, eligibility, and cross-program services more efficient). What is clearly important is that all communications related to a case occur efficiently to ensure proper benefits and accurate documentation of work activities, and that the employment services are appropriate for the participants and for the local labor market.

In the counties visited, the role that DSS income maintenance staff play in direct employment services activities varies depending on official decisions about whether to contract that activity out, as described above. During the welfare reform of the 1980s and 1990s, in many Colorado counties and in other states, welfare staff were given more responsibility for work activities, as integrated case managers serving cases from intake throughout their spell on welfare, or as designated employment or job counselors specifically assigned to lead job readiness workshops and guide individual job search. In the past ten years or so, many human services agencies have begun to contract out employment services to agencies that specialize in work and/or training, such as the One-Stop workforce centers, community colleges, or Goodwill Industries.

In some counties in Colorado where DSS staff had once been more involved with employment services, some expressed frustration at not being more involved now. Usually their non-involvement is attributed to the amount of effort and time that still has to be devoted to implementing the new Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS). In at least four counties, DSS staff reported that in the past they had either been co-located at the WFC, or had regular weekly or monthly meetings with WFC or Colorado Works staff, or participated in job readiness workshops. The demands associated with implementing CBMS resulted in their being withdrawn from such activities and reverting back to straight intake and eligibility determination along with CBMS data entry. Several expressed hope that eventually they could resume involvement with

employment and client services. (It is important to note that in some counties, the WFCs have historically administered all the welfare-work components and still do.)

C. Special Work Programs and Initiatives for Low-Income Families

A number of Colorado counties have chosen to use the flexibility allowed under TANF to provide various services to low income families that may not be receiving TANF cash assistance, especially services designed to prevent hardship, poverty, or subsequent welfare use. Among the counties visited, several have extended their work components beyond the TANF mandatory population, using TANF funds and flexibility to provide work-related services to special target groups. In general, the special employment programs serve individuals in families with incomes up to \$75,000, funded either totally by TANF resources or by a combination of TANF and diversion funds.

Examples of some of the more extensive special employment initiatives include:

- **TANF Youth Programs.** Most counties have a summer youth jobs program, usually administered by WFCs with WIA and other funds, generally for youth in low-income families in the community as a whole. Often the jobs are combined with educational enrichment components. In many counties the summer programs are targeted to TANF youth or there is special outreach to TANF youth, and in some places, DSS contributes funding to the summer program. Among the counties with TANF-focused summer youth programs are Adams, El Paso, Jefferson, Rio Grande, and Weld Counties.

Box 4. Occupation-specific Summer Jobs Program for TANF Youth

Larimer County, Operation Occupation

WIA and TANF partner to fund a summer program primarily for TANF youth entitled “Operation Occupation.” It is an intensive eight-week program that targets youth ages 14 to 17, and includes paid work experience, career assessments including the Employment Readiness Scale, peer networking, workshops on personal development, and educational enrichment. Youth can also obtain summer school credits.

Friday workshops focus on soft skills training, like gender issues in the workplace.

Most job sites are in non-profit organizations, including the Women’s Center, Daycare Centers, United Way, and Catholic Charities, and in community agencies such as libraries.

There is also an employer orientation session, where employers and youth meet and network before youth interview for specific summer jobs.

Employment services for low-income parents. TANF funds can be used to provide services to low-income families. Many counties use this flexibility to provide family services and services to prevent welfare or child welfare. Education and employment opportunities can also be offered. Adams County DSS, for example, has contractors providing post-employment services targeted to former TANF recipients and low-income working families with annual incomes up to \$75,000. Working parents have access to training at community colleges, financial incentives, re-employment services, and diversion.

Special programs for non-custodial parents. Initiatives for non-custodial parents that include employment services operate in some counties, often blending funds from TANF and other sources (e.g., federal fatherhood grants or WIA funds). In El Paso County, for example, the Parent Opportunity Program (POP) for non-custodial parents offers a range of services and assistance, including employment counseling and job search assistance as well as legal assistance and support in working with the child support enforcement program, and personal and parenting counseling.

In fact, while most counties visited had some work projects for families beyond the traditional TANF caseload, staff and administrators in a number of counties reported that they have recently had to eliminate some special initiatives because of funding constraints. Among the terminated employment programs that had been funded totally or partially with TANF funds are a few youth summer jobs programs and programs for non-custodial parents.

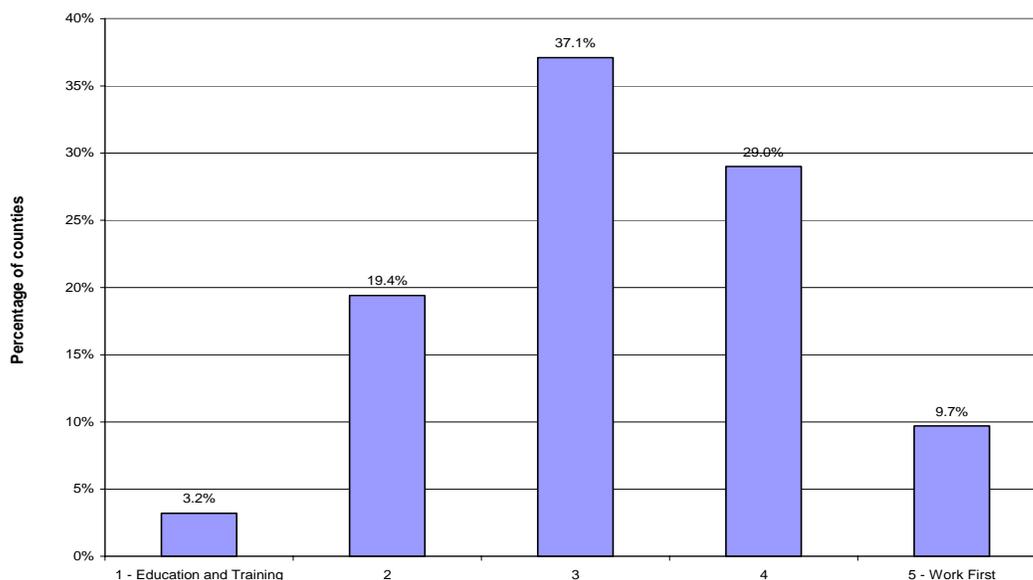
III. WORK EMPHASIS AND COMPONENTS

A. County Emphasis on Work

There is an ongoing policy debate around the country about whether it is preferable for TANF programs to place recipients into jobs quickly, even at low wages, based on the assumption that the workplace is where welfare recipients can best build their work habits and skills, or whether it makes sense to emphasize education and training first, based on the assumption that training will help welfare recipients learn skills that will enable them to obtain better and more secure jobs. The flexibility that Colorado’s counties have in implementing the Colorado Works program allows counties and agencies to make different policy choices based on their different views within this debate.

The survey of all County DSS administrators conducted in the first phase of this project asked officials to rank, on a scale from 1 to 5, the county Colorado Works program philosophy with respect to education and training activities or immediate work participation. *Exhibit 2* shows that the distribution is weighted somewhat more towards work. The most common response was “3”—administrators in 37 percent of the counties indicated a middle approach, often described as one in which the client’s needs dictate the education or work focus. A similar proportion ranked their program philosophy as a “4” or “5”—meaning they place a stronger emphasis on immediate employment, or Work First. Administrators in about one in four counties reported that they have an education/training focus (i.e., a “1” or “2”).

Exhibit 2: County Emphasis



Note: percentages do not sum to 100% because one county did not answer question

B. Employment

Across the state, no metro counties reported that they emphasize education and training over immediate employment. Instead, metro counties were evenly split between immediate employment and a middle ground. Among mid-size and rural counties, the pattern is closer to the overall state pattern, with about one-quarter emphasizing employment and training, about one-third emphasizing immediate employment, and a similar proportion in the middle.

Because no metro counties emphasize training, a relatively small share of the state’s TANF caseload – 10 percent – live in counties with an emphasis on training. More than half of the caseload (58 percent) live in counties with a middle-ground approach, and one-third of the caseload (32 percent) live in counties that emphasize work first.

Our fieldwork confirms the statewide pattern, but further clarified how these priorities are carried out. First, compared to other states where strict direct employment programs often means limited family services, education, or training, in Colorado, counties that are described as Work First tend to offer a wide range of work-related options and family services. In addition, DSS intake and eligibility staff clearly operate under an employment framework, even when staff members themselves have fairly traditional income maintenance and eligibility responsibilities. More specifically, in all counties visited, there seems to be a general consensus that self-sufficiency is a critically important part of the overall mission, as shown in *Exhibit 3*.

Counties vary, though, in terms of how the “work” and self-sufficiency parts of the mission are operationalized. In “work first” counties staff and administrators explained that self-sufficiency is achieved through work, and routinely stated that their assumptions are that everyone can work, with the proper supports—including intensive family services, treatment interventions, and in some cases education or training, preferably after an individual begins a subsidized or

unsubsidized job. In both Adams and Huerfano counties, for example, staff and administrators follow the “no one is unemployable” principle. In other counties where staff clearly explained that they do not have a work first approach, the work components and requirements are also fully operational, but the emphasis on education and training or family services is as important as immediate employment. Another reason why a county may not take a work first approach is a lack of available jobs, a situation mentioned in one rural county that had recently lost several thousand jobs due to the closing of a hospital and a factory. In order to reach TANF participation goals, the program had to consider options beyond direct employment.

Exhibit 3: Work Focus in Colorado Works Counties Visited

Mission as described by staff	Urban and Metro	Non Metro and Rural
Work First/Self-Sufficiency/Prevention	Adams Arapahoe Denver	Huerfano
Education & Training/Self Sufficiency Developmental	Larimer	Bent Garfield
Self-Sufficiency/Prevention Family Services/Client Services/ Empowerment	Boulder El Paso Fremont Jefferson Mesa Pueblo Weld	La Plata Rio Grande Saguache Yuma

C. Employment Services and Components

Each county’s Colorado Works plan establishes what types of activities count toward fulfilling the work participation requirement, and each plan identifies specific services, including employment as well as supportive, family, health and mental health, diversion, and other types of services, that are available to TANF clients. The federal government specifies 12 activities that count toward the federal work participation rate the state must meet, but the range of employment-specific offerings may include some that are not precisely the same as the federally-defined activities. The state does not limit counties to these nationally-specified activities, but all counties have selected some or all activities from this list to count as work participation. While all are officially work-related activities, not all are actually employment-specific, since, for example, several are designed to provide job readiness instruction, job search assistance, job preparedness instruction, or remedial education, to prepare individuals for employment.

Across the state, counties offer various services to TANF recipients to help them find or prepare for work. In the survey of all counties, administrators were asked whether they offer various employment-related services. For discussion purposes, the services are categorized into employment-specific components and employment preparation/support components, as shown on *Exhibit 4*. The most common employment-specific components—activities designed for entry into a subsidized or unsubsidized job—are work experience and CWEP (85.5% of counties) and job search and jobs skills (64.5%). The least commonly offered services include having job

developers who work with businesses and assistance with job retention and advancement (31% each).

**Exhibit 4: Employment Services Offered by
All County Colorado Works Programs**

	% of all Counties
<u>Employment-Specific Components</u>	
Job search/job skills instruction or workshops	64.5%
Subsidized employment	35.5%
Work experience or CWEP	85.5%
Job development	30.6%
Job mentors/coaches	38.7%
Post-employment retention or advancement	30.6%
<u>Employment Preparation or Support Components</u>	
Basic computer skills instruction	59.7%
Life skills or financial literacy instruction	77.4%
Information or assistance on Earned Income Tax Credit	74.2%
Create or contribute to Individual Development Accounts	17.7%
Performance-based contracting for employment providers	17.7%
Joint case management or reviews with partner organizations	56.5%

Our visits to 18 counties again confirmed these statewide patterns as reported by the administrators, as summarized in *Exhibit 5*. Before discussing the key employment-specific components, the patterns observed in the field visits are summarized here:

Exhibit 5: Primary Categories of Work Components in Counties Visited

Field Study Counties	Job readiness/ job search	CWEP, internships, work experience	Education/ training	OJT	Formal employer partner- ships or networks	Post- employment	Social Enterprise
Adams	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Arapahoe	X	X* (CBT)	X (CBT)		X*(CWEP)	X	
Bent	X	X	X				
Boulder	X	X	X	X		X	
Denver	X	X	X				X
El Paso	X	X	X			X	
Fremont	X	X	X		X (CWEP)	X	
Garfield	X	X	X*			X	
Huerfano	X	X*		X	X (OJT & CWEP)		
Jefferson	X	X	X		X(CWEP)		
La Plata	X	X	X	X	X		
Larimer	X	X* (and TEP)	X		X*	X	
Mesa	X	X	X			X	
Rio Grande	X	X	X		X CWEP		
Pueblo	X	X	X				
Saguache	X	X				X	X
Weld	X	X	X			X	
Yuma	X	X	X				

All 18 counties visited offered job search assistance, job readiness, or life skills instructions or workshops.

CWEP/AWEP components are used extensively. All counties visited had some type of work experience or CWEP. In some counties it is considered one of the most important work components, and in those places work experience has a strong developmental focus.

In most counties there is little formal involvement of private sector employers or industries in unsubsidized job hiring or job training. However, in four of the counties visited, there are large established networks of employers (mainly in the public and non-profit sectors) that serve as regular CWEP/AWEP or internship worksites.

All counties refer individuals to formal education and training, usually through various GED programs and the local WFC, or a community college for occupational training. In some places education and training is minimal; in two counties, training has been reduced in the past two years because of budget constraints. However, in about half the counties visited education and training were considered significant—in Garfield County they were considered the most important activities.

Similarly, while some post-employment follow-up with participants exists in all counties (e.g., at least making phone calls in the first month), in about half the counties visited, more

comprehensive post-employment retention or career development components were considered to be an important part of Colorado Works.

Each of these types of employment-specific activities is described in the following sections, highlighting some of the promising strategies observed in the counties visited.

1. Job Search Assistance/Job Readiness

Most counties offer workshops for job readiness; other topics include assessment, motivation, life skills, soft skills, parenting, and financial literacy. In some places, the job readiness components are complemented with (or actually include) pre-employment skills training such as computer skills training or office skills classes. The sessions range in length from 1-5 days to 1-3 months. In a few counties, the upfront job readiness or life-skills workshops occur before an individual applicant has been approved for TANF receipt, and attendance at one or more sessions is a requirement before an application is approved; in other places, the workshops are voluntary or optional until a case is approved for cash benefits.

Every county has some formal job readiness component, but in many counties the primary purpose of the sessions or workshops is assessment, including career assessments and basic skills assessments, as well as assessing barriers or special needs. Some counties have in-depth assessments that involve psychological assessments and interpretation, and formal screening for serious mental health or substance abuse problems. Among the tools used to screen for barriers to employment are SASSI (Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory), PLATO (literacy), physical evaluation test, and Risk Management. Counties also use a variety of tests, screening tools and assessments to help TANF participants identify employment goals, career options, skills, and strengths. The most common test is the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education). Other common tools include career interest inventories (e.g., CHOICES, COPS, COPEs, Career Thoughts Inventory), GATB (General Aptitude Test Battery), and job readiness assessments.

In some counties there is less focus on job search instruction and labor market information than there is on assessment. A few counties, such as Arapahoe, combine both intensive job search and peer support with job readiness and assessment workshops, and the component also includes formal segments on the labor market and on specific occupations in demand in the area. To some extent the fact that there are not more counties that have a strong focus on job search instruction may be appropriate given that many TANF recipients may have multiple barriers to employment. In many counties, a main mission of the agency and Colorado Works is to provide family-focused interventions to alleviate hardship and to move towards self-sufficiency through treatment and family services, and to meet the work participation requirements through CWEP along with supportive components.

Regardless of the emphasis on work, a number of county Colorado Works programs conduct extensive assessments, sometimes testing and assessing clients a number of times during the program. In some places, assessments may be the primary determinant of the next step (for example, in Larimer County). In other counties extensive assessment may be conducted routinely on all participants, usually to identify barriers and special service needs (e.g., mental health) and not only to identify employment services plans.

Box 5. Variation in the “up front” job readiness/life skills components across counties, Selected examples:

- 1-5 day workshop and career assessments (Arapahoe Career Explorations) and extensive independent job search for 4-6 weeks
- 4 hours a day 4 days a week for 4-12 weeks, job search workshop and independent job search (Pueblo County)
- Job Readiness Workshops twice a week for a month, include Internet job search, resumes (Fremont County)
- Job search workshops 4-6 weeks (Boulder County)
- Individual Responsibility Contract (IRC) Development Workshop 4 weeks (before approval of TANF application) (Weld County)
- 8 weeks, extensive assessments, group and individually (Bent County)
- Job readiness is one component of a larger program with many modules: Saguache (CHEERS has 10 components, with cash incentives to participants after completing each)

On-line life skills (Yuma County-True Life Program—not just for TANF, available to the general public, but sponsored locally)

Future reports will examine the employment outcomes that result from participation in the various types of “up front” components that include job search readiness, extensive assessments, and testing (*Box 5*). It is expected that those counties that include formal job search requirements during this component likely have higher job entry rates, at least in the short run, than counties that primarily emphasize assessment. In the long run, it may develop that intensive assessment, barrier identification and alleviation results in long-term employment.

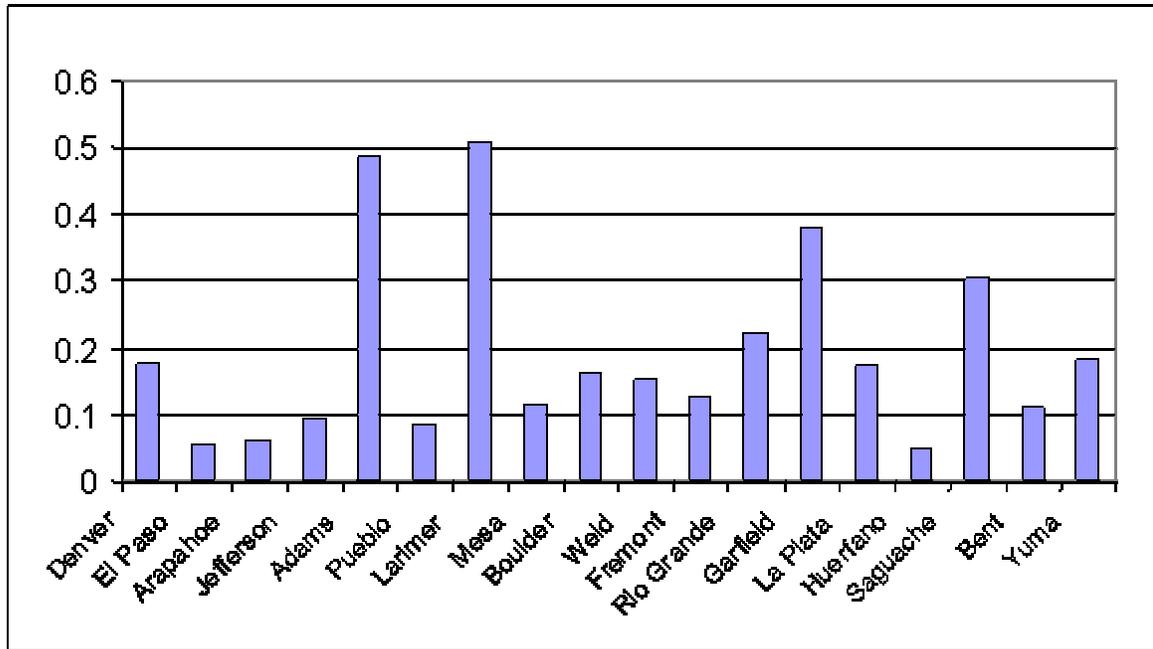
2. Subsidized Employment, Work experience, CWEP, AWEP, Internships

A common work component in Colorado Works is subsidized employment or work experience, variously referred to as CWEP, internship, work experience (WE), or on-the-job training (OJT). The field visits revealed that counties do not all define the various activities the same way. In particular, the distinctions between CWEP, work experience, internships, and OJT are often used interchangeably even within the same county. One supervisor explained that businesses understand the term internships, which is why they use that wording rather than work experience, CWEP, or AWEP. According to CACTIS reports, on average each month in 2004, about 2,000 people participated in one of these worksite components. In five counties across the state, 30 percent or more of the cases participated in this type of activity in 2004—Adams, Garfield, Kit Carson, Larimer, and Saguache. Larimer led all counties in the use of work experience/OJT.

The variation across the 18 sites visited (including four of the five counties with relatively high work experience rates) is shown in *Exhibit 6*, which arrays the 18 counties according to caseload size, with more urban counties on the left side of the chart and the smallest counties on the right. All counties visited have some CWEP/OJT activity. Among the more urban counties, Adams and Larimer have a considerably higher proportion of their participants in subsidized employment/work experience than other counties. Rural counties, though, are just as likely to use this

component as more urbanized counties—with Garfield and Saguache having relatively more than other smaller counties. (The chart combines OJT, WE, CWEP, community service, and AWEP, since in many counties the terms are not clearly distinguishable at the service delivery level. It is possible that there is some duplicate counting across reported components, which suggests these percentages may be overstating the actual participation in subsidized employment. Still, the variations across counties are of interest since they represent different emphases in local programs.)

Exhibit 6: Monthly Percent of TANF Adults in WE/OJT (2004), Selected Counties



Thus, regardless of what it is officially called, all places visited offer some form of subsidized employment or work experience, in either paid or unpaid temporary assignments. Most CWEP and WE jobs are in public and non-profit agencies, although in several counties staff specifically use AWEP for temporary work experience in private businesses. Private sector work experience, however, was very rare in most of the counties visited. That is, there are many examples of a few private companies with work experience or OJT participants in selected counties, but it is not a widespread practice in Colorado Works. In most counties, the number of hours in CWEP/WE is determined based on the grant level divided by minimum wage, and then if the individuals work more hours than required by this formula, a supplement is added to the monthly grant; in a few counties, the hours are limited to the grant divided by minimum wage. Formal traditional OJT contracts tend to be full time for 6-9 months, with the employer receiving a subsidy for a portion of the worker’s wages (e.g., 50%).

Larimer and Adams County both have large-scale, formal work experience components, referred to as internships, that often combine weekly hours in the worksite with hours in education or other developmental activities. In both of these counties, the internships are targeted to occupations or sectors that are expected to grow or in which there is demand for workers, and in both places, there is an expectation of training. Larimer’s internship system is highly centralized, with a coordinator and a large network of employers that have agreed to serve as worksites.

Larimer’s two-component system of subsidized jobs, briefly described in **Box 6**, includes paid and unpaid work experience with the large network of employers, and a smaller transitional employment program with selected public agencies.

Box 6. Two-component subsidized work experience—Internships and Transitional Employment

Larimer County

- **Work Experience and Training Internships.** Designed for cash assistance recipients with little or no job history, internships are intended to provide work experience and build skills. Over 100 employers (public, private, and non-profit) are available as worksites. An employment coach works with the client to identify the appropriate site, stays in monthly contact with the client and worksite supervisor, and assists in finding permanent jobs. The first 3-6 months of the internship are unpaid, up to 32 hours a week (depending on benefit amount). After that, the client can be considered for paid training at minimum wage, up to 20 hours a week. (County agencies cannot provide paid training experience; all paid assignments are with private or non-profit employers. The County covers workers compensation at both paid and unpaid training sites.)
- **Transitional Employment Program (TEP).** TEP is subsidized employment for TANF clients, where individuals are placed in public sector jobs as Office Assistants. There are up to 8 TEP positions at DHS, 2 at the local WFC and one at Veterans Affairs. Each job lasts one year with a possible extension of 3-6 months. Normally, participants work 40 hours per week, but some combine work and school, spending half-time in each. Wages are established by the host agency and are usually \$7 an hour, with the regular income disregards in effect for TANF. When there are TEP vacancies, DHS does mass marketing to TANF recipients, and those who meet the hiring criteria (GED or high school diploma) can apply. TEPs are meant to develop job skills and provide useful work in the agencies at a fair wage. Employees are evaluated regularly by supervisors. While on a TEP job, participants must continue to look for permanent jobs; there are monthly mandatory workshops that focus on job search and “soft” skills. Four individuals have been hired permanently from TEP by the host agency.

In Adams County, internship management is more decentralized, with each of the four employment services Colorado Works contractors responsible for developing the worksites, interacting with employers, and assigning and monitoring participation. Emphasis on internships has increased in recent years, and at the time of the site visit, the employment contractors explained that it was emerging as a core work activity, and nearly always is combined with education, formal job search, and basic employment skills classes such as financial literacy and computer use.

There are other creative and potentially promising models that also involve work experience, including one in Huerfano that has been formally developed to transition an individual from CWEP to OJT, and includes a commitment by the employer to hire the individual into a regular classification when the initial period is over. As in Larimer, the response of agencies has reportedly been good because many are on tight budgets but still need workers. DSS staff maintain monthly contact with the participants to assist with any issues that arise.

Box 7. Training-based Work Experience

Arapahoe County, Community Based Training (CBT) Program

The CBT Program is an approved work/training activity for Colorado Works clients, administered by Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, the workforce center. Each training plan is customized for each participant based on ability, interests, and other assessment information. Individuals are given a pre-test prior to placement and a post-test to measure mastery of specific skills and competencies, and receive a certificate of completion at the end of the training that lists skills and strengths.

Many CBT participants combine their work assignments with education or training (e.g., GED completion) or job search.

And in Arapahoe, the CWEP component has been established as a training-based activity, with clear occupational competencies, pre-post tests of skills attainment, and customized assignments to meet skills, ability, and occupational interests of the participant (**Box 7**).

3. Occupational and Sectoral Skills Training

Every county allows TANF recipients to participate in education or training, although the emphasis varies. The most common arrangement for TANF recipients to obtain occupational skills training are through programs at community colleges, often using a combination of Pell Grants, TANF funds, and WIA funds or Individual Training Accounts (vouchers). In a number of counties visited there is routine co-enrollment of individuals into Colorado Works and WIA, which allows programs to blend funding for training and provide support for clients after they become ineligible for TANF.

In a few counties there is a long history of co-enrolling individuals into both Colorado Works and WIA for training and subsidized work (an arrangement that, in some counties, predates TANF and WIA). For example, Boulder, Fremont, Larimer, Mesa, and Weld all co-enroll many Colorado Works clients with WIA. However, in a number of counties co-enrollment of individuals into both WIA and Colorado Works is a fairly recent practice. Some staff indicated that the impetus to co-enroll individuals arose in order to share costs of subsidies to employers or supportive services such as transportation, child care, and work-related expenses. The new effort is reportedly in response to fiscal constraints in TANF, and a desire to leverage other resources when possible and provide post-employment support.

Co-enrollment or referral into WIA-sponsored training can be a good way to ensure that Colorado Works clients are participating in training for occupations in demand, and is sometimes developed in partnership with employers.

Since many TANF recipients have limited education, it is often difficult for them to successfully participate in formal training. There are some impressive examples of programs developed for Colorado Works participants that include a comprehensive approach to integrating education, life skills, and training for demand occupations, such as the Community College of Aurora's programs that operate under contract from Adams County DSS (**Box 8**). In other counties visited, there are similar programs for TANF recipients that include enrollment in college programs, support and counseling, and special workshops and supplemental classes that are offered through community colleges, including Otero, Front Range, and Red Rocks. In at least one program,

employers help develop the curriculum and screen trainees, and they make preliminary commitments to hire those who satisfactorily complete the training.

Box 8. Community College of Aurora training programs

Adams County

CCA has contracts from Adams County DSS that support two programs:

- **TANF Phase 1** for those on cash assistance, consists of a full range of assessment, testing, contract development, career planning, job search assistance, ESL and GED courses, other classes and workshops, and assignment to work experience internships (all Adams County employment programs now require all to participate in internships plus job search or other classes totaling 40 hours per week), and post-employment services (including access to CCA certification training).
- **CHOICES** for low-income working parents (up to \$75,000 annual family income), including a full range of workshops, classes, job search assistance and access to occupational certification courses offered on campus.

Classes and workshops specifically for CHOICES participants are often scheduled at night (3 nights a week for 9 months); for TANF Phase 1, there are day sessions.

Two of the county Colorado Works programs visited are actively involved with placing TANF recipients into work experience assignments at social enterprises, which combine work with occupational training. Social enterprises are business operations that are developed for specific populations with special needs, or that provide sheltered and supervised work in a business that also raises revenue (e.g., sheltered workshops, light manufacturing, thrift stores, cafeterias, bakeries). In Denver and Saguache County, Colorado Works clients have such opportunities. In Denver, Colorado Works contracts with non-profit organizations that operate social enterprises which are used for work experience placements, such as Safari Seconds thrift store, operated by the African Community Center, and a cafeteria operated by Work Options for Women, which has a formal training program (*Box 9*).

Box 9. Social Enterprise for Work Experience—Food Service

Denver County, Work Options For Women

The Denver Division of Workforce Development (DWD) contracts with the WOW program, which is eight years old. WOW trains TANF and low-income women to get jobs in the food service industry. The training facility (DHS cafeteria) is a real business. WOW has a lease agreement with DHS to operate the cafeteria. This setup (training in an actual business) provides a real obligation for clients to show up from 7:30 am to 2 pm every day. Clients learn food service skills and job readiness. They take classes and there is individualized case management. Clients can earn \$75/week in incentives (a gift card to Walmart) as long as attendance and punctuality are maintained. They must not be late more than twice in a week. If they lose the incentive one week (e.g., late more than twice), they must have a perfect record the next week to regain the incentive. TANF clients are not paid wages. The program is 16 weeks long – participants spend 10 to 12 weeks in the kitchen, two in an internship, and four to six in job placement. Clients have to have a job lined up to graduate.

In Saguache, DSS operates a thrift store set up as a work experience site (**Box 10**). Ideally such experiences should lead to regular unsubsidized employment, but as noted in Box 10, this may be difficult to accomplish. Transition to regular jobs may be more likely to occur if employers or industry groups have been involved in developing the enterprise or if they serve on advisory boards for the business.

Box 10. Social Enterprise for Work Experience and Revenue Generation

Saguache County, Blue Horizon Thrift Store

Blue Horizons is operated by DSS and serves as one of the 12 CHEERS modules for Colorado Works. Clients are expected to work 32 hours a week for up to 6 months (typical assignment is 3 months), and receive regular CHEERS financial incentives. They learn retail skills in an actual retail setting. The store is open Tuesday to Friday and sells donated merchandise (primarily clothing). Blue Horizons makes a profit (\$2,000 in 2005), which is used to purchase training materials and helps offset rent for the facility.

Participants learn to:

- Interact with a boss, co-workers, and customers
- Balance receipts
- Make bank deposits
- Sort merchandise and prepare it for sale
- Dress appropriately for work
- Be punctual

The hope was that with this real work training clients would be better able to obtain unsubsidized jobs in the regular labor market. There have been few job prospects yet (in part because the few employers in the rural area have few job openings) but administrators and staff continue to seek partnerships with area businesses.

D. Job Development

Job development activities can include, for example, outreach and marketing to employers to identify job openings, establishing special hiring agreements, providing industry experts or account executives that specific employers can call when they wish to hire new workers, or arranging for businesses to use office facilities for interviewing or screening job applicants.

Large metropolitan and urban counties visited are among the most likely to have active job development with employers to match Colorado Works participants to both subsidized and unsubsidized jobs. Rural Colorado Works programs are less likely to engage directly with employers, usually because there are few employers in their area who regularly hire new workers.

In general, in counties where the WFC or another employment agency implements the Colorado Works employment services, job development for regular subsidized employment for TANF clients occurs as part of the overall job development for the WFC as a whole. In counties where there are special employment services contractors, such as Goodwill or VESTED, there is special job development for TANF clients. In several counties, though, there is a separate job development unit or job developer that specifically focuses on developing Colorado Works CWEP worksites (often this also includes worksites for Food Stamps Employment First

participants as well) or internships—for example, in Arapahoe, Fremont, and Rio Grande. In most counties, though, self-directed and staff guided job search is the primary approach to obtaining jobs, rather than specific job development for a particular client.

To reinforce the job search activities and requirements, several county programs have established financial incentives to individual participants to encourage them to move as quickly as possible into regular employment, even in rural areas (**Box 11**).

Box 11. Employment Incentive Payments

Saguache County

The finale module of the 12-module CHEERS program around which Saguache Colorado Works is built is job search. Individuals can conduct job searches on their own, with DSS employment staff, or at the nearest Workforce Center (in Monte Vista). To encourage job placement, incentive payments are offered to clients tied to the amount of time it takes to secure employment.

- Within one week: \$500
- Within two weeks: \$400
- Within three weeks: \$300
- Within four weeks: \$200
- Within five weeks: \$100

E. Post-employment Activities

Services intended to improve job retention are used extensively in Colorado, including counseling, transition services, re-employment services, and financial payments. At a minimum, counties provide transitional supportive services (child care and medical assistance) and conduct routine follow-up contacts with persons who enter employment (although in some counties this is limited to one or two months, or until the person is officially off cash assistance). However, in some counties, more comprehensive post-employment services are offered. Adams County, as described in **Box 12**, has an extensive policy for employed low income parents and for employed former TANF recipients, with two contractors (Goodwill and Aurora Community College) providing services, lasting up to two years, that can include occupational and credentialed training. A Goodwill Aftercare model is also supported in El Paso County.

**Box 12. Post-Employment Career Development for TANF Leavers
and Low-Income non-TANF Families**

**Adams County, Job Success Program, Advancement Plus (A+),
and CHOICES**

A+ (operated by Goodwill) and CHOICES (Community College of Aurora) target the working poor (TANF-eligible workers up to \$75,000 annual household income but not on TANF in prior two years)—promoting second earner employment, short-term training and education (3-6 months), job search assistance, and referral to services to improve economic and family stability.

The Job Success Program (operated by Goodwill) provides “aftercare services” to TANF clients who leave cash assistance for employment, after they have been employed for 30 days. Services, similar to those offered through A+ and CHOICES, including short-term training through the Community College, are available for 2 years.

Both DSS contracts are performance-based with specific financial payments tied to results (e.g., increased income, continuous employment, increased education).

Several counties also offer incentives to individuals once they have been employed for a specified period of time. For example:

- Fremont – financial quarterly retention bonuses totaling up to \$100 for 1 year county diversion funds, plus up to \$600 job related expense;
- Garfield – Retention bonuses of \$250 at 90 days, 6 months, and one year for a total of \$750;
- La Plata – county diversion can be used for grant to help people keep jobs, but few apply—also consultant does one-month follow-up and provides guidance, if needed;
- Larimer – Advance Works provides case management and supportive services (up to \$600) for 6 months following TANF;
- Mesa – case managers are available to work with clients for one year and may provide incentives at 3 and 6 months after beginning employment; and
- Weld – Retention Packages with vouchers and grocery cards, haircuts, gas after one month and until off TANF—no follow-up after that.

Some counties use diversion payments for career advancement activities. In Saguache, for example, employed individuals can apply to receive a county diversion payment for certification courses or programs through the community college.

IV. EMPLOYER/INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

Many Colorado Works participants obtain regular employment through self-directed or staff-guided job search, as mentioned above. Still, while job search is a main pathway to employment in Colorado as in other states, there are examples of special arrangements with specific employers or industries, particularly for work experience and CWEP components. There are fewer examples of linkages to private businesses, but in many counties there are examples of

TANF clients obtaining jobs in particular companies, businesses collaborating to develop customized training programs or employers making a commitment to hire individuals after a period of subsidized employment (OJT).

A. Work Experience and Internship Employer Networks

As discussed above, there is extensive use of CWEP and various subsidized employment models in Colorado Works across the counties visited. CWEP is typically in public agencies or non-profit organizations. Counties (such as Adams and Huerfano) that describe their programs as “work first” seem to place equal emphasis on finding clients jobs in the private sector as they do in identifying training or CWEP options. In most other places visited, there seems to be more emphasis on developing worksites for CWEP, internships, or work training in non-profit and public sites.

One defining feature of Colorado Works is, in fact, the extensive networks of employers that are being developed to serve as worksites for CWEP or internship programs. In five counties visited, very large networks of employers have been established for worksite placements (**Box 13**).

Box 13. Employer Networks for CWEP

Larimer County’s internship work experience program has over 100 employers in Fort Collins and Loveland that have signed contracts with the WFC to serve as worksites.

Jefferson County currently has 25 employer worksites for CWEP assignments, with another 50-60 in negotiation.

Rio Grande County’s CWEP component, targeted on those who have little work experience, has 49 employers that have committed to serve as worksites for from 1 to up to 12 TANF clients.

Arapahoe County. One hundred employers in Littleton and Aurora are in the CBT network, having agreed to serve as worksites and provide training as part of the assignment.

Pueblo County. Seventeen employers have agreed to be available as CWEP worksites.

Some of the networks include over 100 employers willing to serve as CWEP or work experience worksites, such as the one operating in Arapahoe County (**Box 14**).

Box 14. Community Based Training Employer Network Employer

Arapahoe County

The Community Based Training Program (CBT) is an approved work/training activity administered by Arapahoe/Douglas Works! (AD Works) for people enrolled in the Colorado Works Program. AD Works has developed over 100 Community Based Training sites (75 in Littleton and 25 in Aurora) in both non-profit organizations and for profit companies. The 100 partnering employers have a capacity to host 225 placements for individuals in the Colorado Works program.

Some of the private sector CBT's are with employers in targeted sectors identified as having future demand for workers—for example, in hospitality, food service, and health sectors—and several private physicians offices are part of the network. All CBT marketing materials are branded. The CBT Coordinator at the WFC maintains regular contact with employers by phone or at the CBT site.

While the formal employer networks include some private sector employers (including a few that we interviewed while we were onsite), most of the partnerships thus far are with non-profit and public sector employers. The private sector examples of partnerships are more likely to result from agreements with particular businesses (usually established by the WFC), or from WFC planning regarding projected future industry and occupational demand. In Arapahoe County, for example, the WFC's ongoing analysis of projected worker demand has been used to target specific sectors (in both public and non-profit settings) for worksites.

Adams County also has a major focus on internships that combine work experience at an employer for about 3 days a week with education, certificate occupational training for specific jobs the other two days (along with ongoing job search). Each of the Adams County employer contractors is responsible for developing the necessary worksites, and some of the early partners include nursing homes, small manufacturing companies, and hospitals.

In general, the public, private, and nonprofit employers who sponsor CWEP jobs with whom we spoke had positive opinions about the arrangement, as indicated by the following comments:

- Public and nonprofit agency managers often explained that CWEP participants helped fill in their staffing needs, especially when fiscal constraints meant they could not hire regular employees.
- Some employers also viewed CWEP as a good way to screen for possible hires—a supervisor in a private company stated that "...I have an opportunity to observe potential employees."
- A few employers explained that they were attracted to the program because it cost them very little: "...DSS pays all wage costs and Workmen's Compensation so, except for costs associated with training and supervision, CWEP participants don't cost us anything."

Nonetheless, the administrative challenges of operating CWEP programs cannot be discounted. Some employers indicated that while they liked the idea of CWEP, the supply of workers was not always predictable and some who were sent to them were not qualified. One public agency employer explained the keys to a successful CWEP program:

“First, the [work experience] coordinator needs to know the community. Second, the coordinator has to have a good relationship with the employer to know what kind of person will work well at our site. Third, the program needs to do a good job screening prior to sending a potential participant to us. And fourth, the program needs to be sure that the client has the tools they need (clothing, child care, way to get to work on-time) so that they can begin working and get here all the time.”

Colorado Works programs in counties with the more formal employer networks have addressed the challenges by establishing routine communications with employers, using their input to screen participants before referring to particular worksites, and having staff designated for particular employer agencies.

B. Sectoral and High-Growth Industry Initiatives

In addition to engaging employers as part of CWEP or internship components, there are several examples of employer and industry partnerships related to occupational training, usually through the WFC, with training programs offered through community colleges. The most common occupational training observed in the visits is for Certified Nursing Assistants, with many community colleges offering CNA training programs in which TANF recipients may enroll. These training programs often involve collaboration with hospitals or nursing homes, both in the curriculum development and as prospective employers for those who complete the training and receive certification:

In partnership with Adams County DSS, the Thornton One-Stop sends TANF recipients to a 3-week training program for Certified Nursing Assistants. For clients who lack employment histories, the One-Stop also maintains work experience positions at non-profits (such as the Humane Society, Head Start, the Food Bank, and the school district) and for-profit firms.

Huerfano County DSS office has a partnership with a hospital and WIA for a CNA training course. The WFC provides basic pre-training preparation, the hospital provides the training, and TANF provides services, day care, and usually an OJT subsidy after training. The hospital also prepares those who want to take an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) course, the next step on the career ladder.

Larimer County’s Office Skills Training program at Front Range Community College was developed with employer input into the curriculum.

Other specific training focuses on particular industries or occupational clusters that have been identified as growth sectors (usually based on analysis by the local economic development agency or WIB). In some cases, this targeted sector training involves partnerships with businesses that result in some TANF recipients obtaining regular unsubsidized jobs if they satisfactorily complete the training:

Warehouse Certification Training is a partnership with Caterpillar Construction. In partnership with Adams County DSS, the Thornton One-Stop Career Center teams with Caterpillar Construction to offer four-day warehouse certification training held at Front Range Community College. About 100 TANF participants have been sent to this program and 45 have eventually been hired by Caterpillar into jobs that pay \$11.50 per hour with full benefits.

Denver Employment Readiness Certification course is a new 9-week class, developed with employer input to provide individuals, including some TANF clients, with critical pre-employment preparation for jobs in targeted demand industries (health sector, hospitality, protective services, business services, and energy).

Community College of Denver's Essential Skills Program (ESP) is a fast-track certificate program that provides intensive services to individuals preparing for entry-level positions in specific career paths. As a specialized program within the Community College of Denver (CCD), its mission is to combine vocational training, work readiness, case management and internships in a sequence that gains participants entry into high-demand occupations with good wages. The philosophy of ESP is that hard-to-serve populations learn most effectively when engaged in simultaneous training and employment, coupled with strong case management, and that employer-driven training partnerships provide the greatest opportunity for entry-level workers to gain entrance into real career paths with sustainable wages.

Finally, in several counties there is currently a trend in the WFCs toward developing expertise in particular sectors to improve staff understanding of business practices, encourage new businesses (usually as part of local economic development planning), or identify industries or businesses projected to grow in the coming years. In the Larimer WFC, for example, there is a newly-created staff position—the Workforce Development Liaison—whose responsibility includes maintaining current information on labor market and sectoral growth, continually educating staff about trends in employment, arranging for employers to make presentations on panels and at workshops, and forging formal linkages with businesses to WFC programs, including Colorado Works. Many of these labor market-focused initiatives are occurring through the WFCs and WIBs. However, as a major partner, Colorado Works is also involved, and it is likely that in coming months and years, TANF clients, like other workers, may benefit from an expanded set of job opportunities.

In some places, this sectoral focus has led to new training programs, as in Durango, although staff in both the WFC and DSS cautiously note that some sectoral training courses have few TANF enrollees.

The Adult Education Center in Durango, in collaboration with several other organizations, operates a WIA-funded program that provides low-skilled workers with training and certification for high-demand occupations. The targeted industries are hospitality, gas and oil, and commercial drivers. La Plata County Colorado Works refers clients to this program, and they mainly enroll in the hospitality training (the gas and oil program is a 6-month course in New Mexico and the commercial drivers license course prepares workers for long distance transport, neither of which are options for many TANF mothers).

The Boulder WFC is focusing on 4 sectors: retail, technology, manufacturing, and health care, based on projected growth studies by the Boulder County Economic Development Board. They are developing partnerships with associations in each sector, and have assigned one staff person to be an expert in each, to make their system as demand driven as possible.

The benefits of these employer and industry initiatives may become evident in the coming years. There are areas in which Colorado Works can improve, including developing staff capacity regarding job development, industry expertise, and linking TANF recipients to the various high-growth initiatives now being supported and encouraged by the Federal government.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The previous sections describe the types of employment-specific services and approaches operating in the 18 counties visited as part of the broader Colorado Works Evaluation. Future reports will examine administrative activity data and employment outcomes to better analyze the relative effectiveness of the various approaches. Although we do not yet have statistical data to analyze results, the field-based process analysis in the study sites does provide insights about the variations across counties in terms of employment services and Colorado Works links with employers or industries.

The general observations from the field, and the experiences highlighted in the previous sections, suggest that there are some potentially promising strategies for providing employment services, preparing participants for high-demand occupations, partnering with local workforce agencies, and developing networks of worksite sponsors for CWEP and internships. There are also opportunities for improving employment service strategies that some counties may wish to consider.

The first general observation is that the most common employment-specific activities in the counties visited are (1) job readiness workshops that generally include some guided job search activity, and (2) work experience (variously referred to as CWEP, AWEP, work experience, or internships). Both job readiness instruction and work experience operate in all 18 counties visited. In about half the counties, staff indicate that education and training are also very important, particularly remedial education. In a few counties, education is integrated with training or work experience, but in most places, they are separately addressed.

As noted in Chapter 1, research indicates that job readiness workshops and job search assistance can result in higher in-program (work) participation levels and speeds up entry into employment, although wages tend to be relatively low. Work experience and CWEP have somewhat lower rates of entry into regular unsubsidized jobs, but usually result in high in-program participation rates. Short term education and training alone for low-skilled individuals has limited effect on long term employment. Counties interested in increasing the quality of job placements (e.g., longer retention or improved prospects for wage increases) may wish to consider some of the mixed strategies, described in previous chapters, that integrate skills development into work activities; examples include services and subsidies for post-employment occupational training through community college credential programs, allowing part-time CWEP and part-time education or training, or negotiating with employers to convert CWEP into formally subsidized OJT contracts that include a commitment to hire.

Recent research suggests that perhaps the best types of training (in terms of long-term employment and earnings) may be that which is most closely linked to the workplace. It also makes sense to engage employers or industries directly in customizing the training.

A second, and related, general observation concerns how to decide what types of integrated employment and skills development strategies make sense. In many counties, the primary employers may be public or nonprofit agencies; in other counties there is strong private sector business expansion in certain industries (e.g., health care, construction, energy, and manufacturing). The most advantageous job opportunities may be in the high-growth sectors. Many county Colorado Works programs assess individuals' occupational interests and use that information to help them search for jobs or consider training. Since interests may not necessarily

match job opportunities, it is important to consider local labor market trends and projections. County DSS agencies that are interested in capitalizing on the local economic growth trends can work closely with local WIBs and economic development agencies in planning workforce development to support local economic development activities and to place Colorado Works participants into jobs in high growth/high wage industry sectors. DSS agencies could conduct their own labor market analysis on a regular basis and develop in-house expertise on high-growth industry and employers. In most cases, though, it may make more sense to use the labor market and business expertise of local and state WIBs, which routinely maintain, update, and analyze those trends. While local WFCs are main partners in Colorado Works, the DSS agency programs, staff, and administrators are not always specifically part of that analysis, marketing, and planning activity. Even if the WFC is not involved directly with Colorado Works, DSS agencies could be more pro-active by, for example, participating in economic development and workforce strategy efforts, requesting agreement that a certain number of training or employment slots be set aside for TANF recipients, and sponsoring training sessions for DSS and contractor staff to learn more about labor market information and industry trends.

The third general observation from the field is that several Colorado Works programs have developed large and formal networks of employers for CWEP and work experience. In five counties visited, there are extensive and developed networks of employers for work experience or CWEP components, usually organized and managed by WFCs, but Goodwill and other employment contractors also have networks for their various programs that benefit Colorado Works CWEP components. Some networks (in metropolitan and urban areas) have over 100 employers willing and prepared to serve as work sites for TANF clients. This is an impressive accomplishment. A few county programs also identify the specific skills needed by particular employers in their networks and prepare TANF clients accordingly for work experience, transitional jobs, or internships.

Employers in the networks tend to be primarily in the public and non-profit sectors. There are fewer examples of promising interactions and partnerships with private sector employers. Some counties may wish to consider ways to adapt the concept more specifically for unsubsidized private sector jobs. In rural areas, large networks of employers are not possible, but some rural counties have adapted similar employer arrangements, such as working with public agencies, health centers, or correctional facilities, and preparing and screening TANF recipients for specific occupational requirements.

Thus, Colorado Works programs have interesting and well-developed employment strategies and components, particularly job readiness components, occupational assessments, job search assistance, and work experience opportunities. Several counties have also implemented more advanced employment approaches intended to improve long-term economic outcomes, such as maintaining formal employer networks, supporting occupation-specific skills training, and subsidizing post-employment education and credentials for those who leave the welfare rolls for employment.

Acronyms

A+	Advancement Plus (Goodwill Industries, Adams County)
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ADHD	Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
AWEP	Alternative Work Experience Program
BBH	Baby Bear Hugs (Yuma)
BHO	Behavioral Health Organization
CACTIS	Colorado Automated Client Tracking Information System
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBMS	Colorado Benefits Management System
CBT	Community Based Training (Arapahoe)
CCA	Community College of Aurora
CCD	Community College of Denver
CDHS	Colorado Department of Human Services
CHEERS	Community Household Education & Economic Resource Center (Saguache)
CHOICES	CHOICES Specialized Training Options (Community College of Aurora)
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistant
COPEs	Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey
COPS	Career Occupational Preference System
CRC	Capital Research Corporation
CWEE	Center for Work Education and Employment (Denver)
CWEP	Community Work Experience Program
DBT	Dialectical Behavior Therapy
DHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DSS	Department of Social Services
DV	Domestic Violence
DVERT	Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (El Paso)
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
DWD	Division of Workforce Development (Denver)
EIPP	Early Intervention and Prevention Program (Adams)

ERS	Employment Readiness Scale
ES	Employment Services
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	Essential Skills Program (Denver)
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FPL	Federal Poverty Level
FRCC	Front Range Community College
GATB	General Aptitude Test Battery
GED	General Educational Development (high school equivalency)
HEP	High School Equivalency Program (Buena HEP, Rio Grande)
IRC	Individual Responsibility Contract
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training\
LCMH	Larimer County Mental Health
LD	Learning Disability
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse
MMPI-2	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (used in Bent County)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSR	Monthly Status Report
MYAT	Multidisciplinary Youth Assessment Team (Weld)
NJCLD	National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities
OJC	Otero Junior College
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PCM	Primary Case Manager (Denver)
PHA	Public Housing Authority
PREP	Personal Responsibility Employment Program (Mesa)
PLATO	PLATO Simulated GED Preparation Package
POP	Parent Opportunity Program (El Paso)
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PW	Project Wise (Denver)
RMBH	Rocky Mountain Behavioral Health (Fremont County)
SASSI	Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory

SSA	Social Security Administration
SSBG	Social Services Block Grant
SSI/SSDI	Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance
SIPP	Survey of Income and Program Participation
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TDM	Team Decision Making (child welfare)
TEP	Transitional Employment Program (Larimer)
TESSA	Trust Education Safety Support Action (El Paso)
TIGHT	Teamwork, Innovation, Growth, Hope, and Training Youth Corps
TPG	Transitional Psychological Group (Weld)
UCHSC	University of Colorado Health Sciences Center
VESL	Vocational English as a Second Language (Community College of Denver)
VESTED	Vocational Enhancements: Services, Training & Education (La Plata)
WAIT	Why Am I Tempted? (Weld)
WE	Work Experience
WFC	Workforce Center
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIB	Workforce Investment Board
WOW	Work Options for Women (Denver)