

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Data Innovation Project

The TANF Data Innovation (TDI) project is an investment to expand the integration, analysis, and use of TANF data to improve program administration, payment integrity, and outcomes for participants. Launched in 2017, TDI is sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in collaboration with the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The project will build long-term staff capacity at the state and federal levels, while also making immediate contributions to the quality of TANF data. By institutionalizing modern data integration strategies and supporting efforts in the human services community to use data analysis for program improvement, the project will provide a lasting benefit to the TANF evidence base. Highlighting its policy relevance, TDI is consistent with stated aims in the President's FY 2018 proposed budget and the legislation that led to the formation of the Commission for Evidence-Based Policymaking.

Led by MDRC, in partnership with Dr. Dennis Culhane of Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Robert Goerge from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and Dr. Julia Lane of New York University, TDI has the following planned key components:

- *Comprehensive needs assessment:* The TDI team will collect information on the readiness of TANF agencies to set up and operate data systems supporting program improvement. A key goal of the needs assessment is to categorize states on a continuum of readiness to integrate and analyze program data.
- *Broad training and technical assistance (TTA) to states on using integrated data for building evidence:* Informed by the needs assessment and input from key stakeholders, TDI will offer and support a broad learning collaborative of TANF agencies and their partners. The TTA will include a range of options to help states progress up a TANF data innovation pathway. The goal of the TTA is to meet states where they are and enable a new level of readiness to use integrated data and analytics to build evidence.
- *Intensive pilots for incubating ideas:* The TDI project will provide an opportunity for a subset of TANF agencies to become pilot sites, further accelerating learning and implementing specific projects relevant to participating agencies. Selected pilot sites will receive more intensive TA, participate in a pilot learning community, and receive resources to support their efforts. TDI will facilitate the dissemination of lessons learned from these pilot efforts to advance practice in the field as a whole.
- *The inclusion of program integrity:* Additionally, the TDI team will perform a needs assessment of states' current uses of integrated data to ensure payment accuracy and program integrity. The final report will provide recommendations for improving efficiency and effectiveness of state program integrity procedures.
- *Capacity building at the federal level:* The TDI team will provide support for building TANF data capacity at ACF by providing expert staff support to OFA.

The project will conclude with evaluations of the successes and challenges in the TTA and Pilot initiatives and will feature a broad range of dissemination efforts.