Collaborating for Action in a Fragmented Policy Environment: Nonprofit Organizations, Devolution, and the Welfare-to-Work Challenge

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The last 25 years have witnessed unprecedented change in the manner in which services are provided to needy families and neighborhoods in the United States. The roles that government agencies (at all levels), private businesses, and nonprofit organizations play in the delivery of human services is much more intertwined than previously existing patterns. The complexity in the human service field has intensified in recent years due to a number of major national policy changes as well as changes in the manner in which the delivery of services is organized.

Much has been written about the increased role that nonprofit organizations play in many fields of domestic policy and the central role they play in many fields of human service.[1] As Lester Salamon notes in the introduction of his recent book, it has only been recently that scholars and policy analysts have begun to devote serious attention to better understanding the nonprofit sector and the rise of what Salamon calls "third-party government," a reference to the increasing trend among governments at all levels—particularly the federal government—to rely on others (state and local governments, nonprofit organizations) to carry out its business. As Salamon observes, "the proliferation, expansion, and extension of these [grant-in-aid programs] and other tools of federal policy have substantially reshaped the landscape of federal operations. In almost every policy sphere, federal operations now involve a complex collage of widely assorted tools mobilizing a diverse collection of different types of actors to perform a host of different roles in frequently confusing combinations."[2]

While many typically associate the rise of third-party government with the growth in federal grant programs, and the consequent growth in state and local government employment, it is becoming increasingly apparent that many government programs are increasingly being carried out by nonprofit organizations. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census of Service Industries for the period 1977-1992, Richard Nathan and his colleagues show that employment in the nonprofit social service industry grew at a faster rate than did employment in the private sector, state and local government, and state and local government employment in public welfare.[3] While employment was up sharply in all categories of social services, Nathan notes that employment more than doubled in the areas of individual and family services (159%), non-childcare social services (113%), home health care (127%), and residential care (135%). Employment in job training and related services increased by 96 percent during this same period.

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[1] See, for example, Lester M. Salamon, Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Elizabeth T. Boris and C. Eugene Steuerle, Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and Conflict (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1999).

[2] Salamon, Partners in Public Service, p. 21.

[3] Richard P. Nathan, Elizabeth I. Davis, Mark J. McGrath, and William C. O'Heaney, "The 'Nonprofitization Movement' as a Form of Devolution," in Dwight F. Burlingame, William A. Diaz, Warren F. Ilchman and Associates, eds., Capacity for Change? The Nonprofit World in the Age of Devolution (Bloomington: Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 1996).

Nathan also points out a wide range of variation in terms of the role that nonprofit organizations play in particular industry sectors. For example, while nonprofit organizations account for about 90 percent of all employment in the individual and family services and job training and related services category for the 15-year period examined, the nonprofit share of employment in the home health care and child day care services industries is only about 40 percent. Nathan and his colleagues conclude that the rising importance of nonprofit organizations in fields such as human services and community development has been closely related to the rise of federal devolutionary policy instruments such as block grants, waivers, and deregulation. Thus, it is important to note that devolution comes in many flavors; when we speak of devolution, it is not necessarily from national to state governments, but quite often the ultimate recipient of devolutionary authority turns out to be nonprofit organizations.

The implications of this latter form of devolution are the focus of Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael Lipsky's study, *Nonprofits for Hire*. Smith and Lipsky point out that "lost in the month-to-month details of grantmaking, periodic audits, and government budget cycles are larger questions about the changing nature of the political community in the contracting regime." They add that "the balance between public and private responsibilities for meeting the service needs of citizens is changing. Government priorities and controls increasingly structure the procedures and priorities of nonprofit providers."[4] This leads in turn, to what Smith and Lipsky refer to as the irony of privatization through contracting: "supported by some as a device to reduce the size and influence of government, privatization as contacting instead has resulted in unprecedented involvement of government in the affairs of nonprofit organizations. Instead of shrinking the role of government and making the provisions of public services subject to market discipline, contracting has actually diminished and constrained the community sector by government intervention in nonprofit organizations."[5] They go on to add that there is a second irony of privatization: "as nonprofit service providers are forced to be more business-like, they become more rule-bound and more intent on the bottom line of fiscal health at the expense of responsiveness. Contracting may have transformed nonprofit agencies into organizations whose norms are consistent with public policies that seeks to limit citizen claims on government and government-funded agencies."[6]

In addition to growing importance of nonprofit organizations, another important element of the current context of social policy is the devolution of federal responsibility to state and local governments. While fascination with devolution has captured a great deal of attention from scholars and the media, there has been a quiet revolution underway in many local communities across the country that is seeking to promote systemic change in the manner in which local communities address important public problems. Begun in part as an effort to rationalize the delivery of human services, in many localities it has evolved into a new comprehensive strategy for urban revitalization that has come to be known as community building.[7] The implementation

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[4] Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael Lipsky, Nonprofits for Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 206.

[5] Ibid., p. 204.

[6] Ibid., p. 205.

[7] For an overview see, G. Thomas Kingsley, Joseph P. McNeely, and James O. Gibson, Community Building Coming of Age (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute and the Development Training Institute, April 1997). Available at (http://www.urban.org/community/Com_bldg.pdf).

of recent national policy changes, particularly those pertaining to welfare reform and workforce development, will face many opportunities as well as important challenges because of efforts such as these.

In his book *Turning Promises into Performance: The Management Challenge of Implementing Workfare*, Richard Nathan concludes that the "shadow land of policy implementation is the neglected dimension of United States governance. Indeed, it is not surprising that the competitive United States political system produces an implementation vacuum. There are so many players engaged in making policy in the United States that there is not enough energy left over in the political process to follow up on what happens to policy after it is made."[8]

Nathan emphasis on governance speaks directly to issues of primary concern to political scientists, but does so in a way that requires our thinking to move beyond the formal institutions of government (and also beyond the partitioning of activity into public and private spheres) and instead look more closely at how government leaders mobilize key sectors in society to act to solve important public problems.

In this paper we seek to examine this shadow land of policy implementation as it pertains to welfare reform. Our intent is to demonstrate that what former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare referred to as the vending machine model of social policy change—insert a coin that delivers a law that is expected to solve the problem—is no longer effective in today's more complicated policy landscape. As Lisbeth Schorr, who recounted that observation from Secretary Gardner, noted at a recent symposium "that simply passing a law no longer can be considered the best way to solve a problem doesn't mean that lawmaking should go out of fashion. It does suggest a more thoughtful approach to making laws…it does mean a shift from mandating and regulating to facilitating…It means recognizing that policymakers, whether in Washington or in state capitals, will accomplish more when they are willing to listen to how communities perceive both problems and solutions and when they listen to how their lawmaking affects what actually happens on the front lines."[9]

Our paper begins with an overview of the major policy changes brought about by the passage of welfare reform legislation in 1996. We then summarize what has emerged as the dominant paradigm for contemporary social policy interventions--collaboration. Having set the policy context, we proceed to a discussion of Georgia's experience in implementing welfare reform, using the case as an opportunity to illustrate the perils of the shadow land, and the dangers of putting too much faith in the vending machine model as an agent for social change.

Our case analysis of Georgia opens with a short description of the state context, shifts to brief profiles of efforts to foster collaboration around welfare reform and workforce development in two substate areas (metropolitan Atlanta and two counties in rural, Southwest Georgia), and concludes with a preliminary empirical assessment of the impacts of local collaboration on selected policy outcomes pertaining to welfare reform/workforce development based on a

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[8] Richard P. Nathan, Turning Promises Into Performance: The Management Challenge of Implementing Workfare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 122.

[9] Lisbeth Schorr, "Strategies That Make a Difference," in Lisbeth Schorr, Kathleen Sylvester, and Margaret Dunkle, Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose: Tools for Turning Good Ideas Into Good Policies (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, The Policy Exchange, 1999), pp. 3-4.

statewide analysis conducted at the county level. Our paper concludes with some observations on the challenges of implementing major social policy change in the American federal system.

Ending Welfare as We Know It: The Social Policy Context at Century's End

Unlike previous efforts at reforming welfare (most recently, the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills program created by the Family Support Act of 1988), the 1996 policy changes designed to "end welfare as we know it" have been accompanied (and to some extent preceded) by several national policy initiatives designed to complement—and in some cases better integrate—federal resources available to assist states and localities in meeting the challenge of moving needy households from welfare-to-work. As the brief descriptions below reveal, the array of national policy responses has been impressive, and perhaps unequalled since the days of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, when a plethora of new federal programs were enacted to address the needs of the poor and the neighborhoods in which they resided.

And unlike the War on Poverty, the recent Welfare-to-Work initiatives lack a central, coordinating entity such as the Office of Economic Opportunity that was located inside the Executive Office of the President during the Johnson administration. Our point is not to suggest that the recent welfare reform initiatives are doomed because of this lack of central coordination (many have argued that the War on Poverty initiatives failed because of a lack of coordination at the national level),[10] but to emphasize four characteristics of this recent spate of policy initiatives that have important implications for whether or not welfare reform succeeds in moving families from welfare to work to economic self-sufficiency.

First, as is evident below, there has been an increase in the amount of federal resources available to support needy families. Second, there is a greater degree of linkage among these new initiatives than has typically been the case with previous efforts to reform welfare. That is, welfare reform is no longer a proprietary issue for the Department of Health and Human Services, but one that draws upon the departments of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Agriculture, and Commerce, among others. A third implication, is the substantial discretion that has been devolved to state (and local) governments. And fourth, the local context is changing dramatically in many communities, due largely to efforts at systems reform being led by national (and local) foundations and nonprofit organizations, and in some cases state and local governments.

[10] See, for example, James L. Sundquist, Making Federalism Work (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1969); Bernard J. Frieden and Marshall Kaplan, The Politics of Neglect: Urban Aid from Model Cities to Revenue Sharing (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975); and Marshall Kaplan and Peggy Cuciti, eds., The Great Society and Its Legacy: Twenty Years of U.S. Social Policy (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986).

The 1996 Welfare Reform Legislation[11]

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 signed into law by President Clinton was designed to "end welfare as we know it." The bill is a comprehensive piece of federal legislation that makes significant alterations to a number of programs that comprise the social safety net. Most important, the legislation ends the federal government's open-ended commitment to needy families through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. Instead of sharing with states in the costs of providing cash assistance to needy families on a case-by-case basis, the legislation terminates the AFDC program and replaces it with a new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which provides block grants to state governments to support needy families on a time-limited basis.

The new law limits federal assistance to families to no more than five years (whether consecutive or not), though states may provide assistance with their own funds after 60 months. Also, all adult TANF recipients must participate in some type of work activity after receiving cash assistance for 24 months and the legislation establishes a series of work participation rates that states must achieve over the course of the program, beginning with a 25 percent participation rate in 1997 and rising five percent each year to 50 percent in 2002 and beyond. Work participation rates for two-parent families begin at 75 percent in 1997 and rise to 90 percent in 1999 and beyond.

In addition to changes in the AFDC program, the legislation also makes a number of important changes in child care, Food Stamps (a work requirement is also instituted), Supplemental Security Income for Children, benefits for legal immigrants, and the Child Support Enforcement Program. Child nutrition programs are also altered by the legislation and funding for the Social Services Block Grant program is reduced by 15 percent (from $2.8 billion to $2.38 billion). Overall, the legislation is projected to save $54.5 billion over six years, with most of the savings attributed to changes in the Food Stamp program and reductions in benefits for legal immigrants. Funding for the TANF program, which replaces AFDC, was set at $16.4 billion per year.

Although states previously shared in the costs of financing and administering the AFDC program and had a certain amount of control over the substance of the program (e.g., states varied widely in terms of the monthly cash grants provided and the need levels used to determine eligibility), the new legislation gives states even greater control over the shape of welfare programs. States were required to submit a state plan describing the content of their welfare programs to the federal government and begin implementing the TANF program by July 1, 1997. The legislation allows states to impose a family cap (i.e., deny assistance to additional children born or conceived while the parent is receiving public assistance), deny assistance to unmarried

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[11] The origins and provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 have been well summarized elsewhere. Those interested in a through recounting of the politics of its adoption and/or the specifics of its provisions should see, for example, Troy Smith, "When States Lobby: Welfare Reform, 1993-1997," Paper presented at the 1998 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, September 3-6, 1998; Anne Marie Cammisa, <u>From Rhetoric to Reform? Welfare Policy in American Politics</u> (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); Gary Bryner, <u>Politics and Public Morality: The Great American Welfare Reform Debate</u> (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998). A useful web site for a comprehensive overview is the Welfare Information Network (http://www.welfareinfo.org).

teen parents and their children, and require school attendance by parents and children in a family. States may use their TANF funds for a variety of activities including cash assistance to needy families, child care, educational activities, and for any "manner reasonably calculated to accomplish the purpose of the TANF." States may also transfer up to 30 percent of their TANF funds into the Child Care Development Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant, though no more than 10 percent of a state's TANF funds can be transferred to SSBG and those funds must be spent on activities that benefit children and families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty level.

In addition, the new legislation provides a number of performance incentives. Those "high performing states" that do best at meeting the goals of the program (putting welfare households to work) will share in a $1 billion performance bonus fund ($200 million a year for five years). An additional illegitimacy reduction bonus fund has been authorized that will provide $20 million annually to each of the five states that achieve the greatest reduction in out-of-wedlock births without increasing their abortion rates. The law also includes a maintenance of effort requirement—i.e., in order to receive their full TANF grant states must spend an amount equal to at least 75 percent of their fiscal 1994 spending on AFDC, JOBS, AFDC-related child care, and Emergency Assistance. States that fail to spend at their 1994 level will have their grants reduced one dollar for each dollar they fall under the 1994 baseline. In addition, states that fail to meet the work participation targets will have their grants reduced on a proportionate basis, up to a maximum reduction of 21 percent.

Since the enactment of the 1996 welfare reform legislation, a number of new policy initiatives have been created to support the act's central objective of moving people from dependency to economic self-sufficiency. Some of these initiatives are primarily symbolic, though many have provided new resources to address many of the substantive barriers that must be overcome in moving people from welfare to work. These include: [12]

- <u>The Welfare to Work Partnership</u>. In his 1997 State of the Union address, President Clinton recognized five businesses for their exemplary efforts in hiring former welfare recipients. In May 1997, these businesses, along with 100 additional partners, launched the Welfare to Work Partnership, which was formed to provide technical assistance and support to businesses across the country interested in hiring welfare recipients. As of 1999, the Partnership included more than 10,000 businesses.

- <u>The Federal Government's Hiring Initiative</u>. Following passage of the welfare reform legislation in 1996, the Clinton administration announced a federal government hiring initiative in which federal departments and agencies pledged to hire at least 10,000 welfare recipients over the next four years. As of August 1997, over 9,700 welfare recipients had been hired.

- <u>The Welfare to Work Coalition to Sustain Success</u>. In May 1997, Vice President Gore announced the creation of a coalition of civic, religious, and nonprofit groups to

[12] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, ACF Press Room, "Clinton-Gore Accomplishments Reforming Welfare," March 26, 1999. Available at http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welsum21.htm.

help welfare recipients keep the jobs they are able to obtain.[13] The Welfare to Work Coalition to Sustain Success will work with federal and state agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and businesses to help identify resources available to promote job retention among welfare recipients (e.g., transportation, child care, job training) as well mentoring, advice, job coaching, and other support.

- Small Business Administration. The SBA has launched an initiative through its network of small business and women's business centers, one-stop capital shops, and district offices, to help connect small businesses with job training organizations and job-ready welfare recipients. In addition, the SBA also works directly with welfare recipients interested in starting their own businesses, providing training, technical assistance, and in some instances, financial support.

- Welfare to Work Grants. The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 authorized the U.S. Department of Labor to provide $3 billion in Welfare-to-Work grants to states and localities to assist them in their efforts to move the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients into the workforce. Two types of funding were provided: 1) 75 percent of the funds are distributed to the States as formula grants, of which the States are required to pass through 85 percent of these funds to local Private Industry Councils (also known as workforce development boards), who typically have primary responsibility for implementing federal employment and training programs; and 2) 25 percent of the funds are used for competitive grants awarded directly to local communities (e.g., local governments, Private Industry Councils, community development corporations, nonprofit organizations).

  Welfare-to-Work grants may be used to provide job placement, transitional employment, and other support services needed to assist welfare recipients in making the transition to work (e.g., child care, transportation). At least 70 percent of WTW funds must be spent on: 1) individuals with specified labor market deficiencies (e.g., lack high school or GED education, substance abuse, poor work history) who are long-term (30+ months) welfare recipients; 2) those who face elimination from TANF within 12 months; or 3) noncustodial parents of minors whose custodial parent meets the above criteria. Up to 30 percent of WTW funds may be spent on individuals who are "recent" TANF recipients or noncustodial parents who have characteristics associated with long-term welfare dependency (e.g., school dropout, teen pregnancy, poor work history). The President's FY 2000 budget proposes an additional $1 billion for WTW grants, to be distributed during FY 2000 and FY 2001, of which at least 20 percent of the funds distributed by formula will be targeted to assist low-income fathers in obtaining work and paying child support.

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[13] The 18 charter members of the Welfare-to-Work Coalition to Sustain Success are: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Baptist Joint Committee, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Daughters of Isis, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Goodwill Industries, Links, Lions Club International, National Civic League, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Negro Women, National Urban Coalition, Optimist International, The Salvation Army, Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, United Way, Women's Missionary Union, and YMCA. "Vice President Announces Next Major Step in Administration's Welfare-to-Work Efforts," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 29 May 1997) (Available at http://ftp.irs.ustreas.gov/pub/w-house/u0530-2.txt).

- The Workforce Investment Act. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 fundamentally restructures the federally-funded system of job training and other employment-related services for adults and dislocated workers by replacing programs authorized under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) with three new funding streams—one for adults, one for youth, and one for dislocated workers.[14] Eighty-five percent of the adult and youth funding streams will be allocated to local areas with the remainder reserved for statewide activities. States will be required to develop a workforce investment board and develop a five-year strategic plan that outlines the state's strategy for developing a "One-Stop" approach where information and access to job training, education, and employment services is available to customers at a single location, preferably neighborhood-based. In addition, the legislation authorizes three levels of services (core, intensive, and training), some of which are mandatory and must be provided at each site. Futher, the act mandates that the a majority of the state board consist of business executives and specifies the composition of the remaining members. The legislation also includes provisions for local workforce investment boards, gives considerable power to local elected officials regarding the appointment of members to these boards, and mandates a number of local activities that these boards must oversee through the operation of a "one-stop" system. Perhaps most important, the act identifies more than a dozen mandatory one-stop partners; agencies involved in administering TANF, however, are not required but may participate as one-stop partners.

- Welfare to Work Tax Credit. The 1997 Balanced Budget Act also contained provisions authorizing a federal income tax credit to employers to encourage the hiring of long-term welfare recipients (18+ months of TANF receipt prior to hire). A tax credit of up to $3,500 (35 percent of the first $10,000 in wages) is available for the first year of employment and a credit of up to $5,000 (50% of the first $10,000 in wages) is available for the second year. This credit compliments the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (up to $2,400) for first year wages paid to eight groups of job seekers and the Empowerment Zone Tax Credit (up to $3,000) for employees hired who are residents of six Federal Empowerment Zones. The Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit is being administered by the U.S. Department of Labor through the various state employment agencies.

- Welfare-to-Work Housing Vouchers. The FY 1999 budget included authorization for $283 million for 50,000 new housing vouchers for welfare recipients who need housing in order to get or keep a job. Nearly all of these vouchers will be distributed to local communities on a competitive basis, with emphasis given to communities who create collaborative initiatives among their housing, welfare, and employment and training agencies to assure that these funds are effectively used to aid recipients in making the transition from welfare to work. The President's FY 2000 budget proposes $430 million for 75,000 welfare-to-work housing vouchers, including $144 million for 25,000 new vouchers. Awards of these housing vouchers will be

[14] For an overview of the provisions of this act see Steve Savner, "Training Issues Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998," (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, October 1998). Available at (http://www.clasp.org/pubs/jobseducation/wiaanalysis.htm).

determined by HUD, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Labor.

- Welfare-to-Work Transportation. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998) authorized $750 million over a five-year period to support Access to Jobs, a transportation and reverse commute initiative designed to assist states and localities in developing transportation initiatives (e.g., van pools, extension of existing transit routes into job-rich suburban areas, extension of hours of operation to accommodate evening/week-end workers, etc.) to aid welfare recipients and other low-income workers make the journey to work, as well as to child care centers, job training sites, and other service centers. This national program builds off of earlier demonstration programs in selected communities (e.g., the Federal Transit Administration's Livable Communities and Joblinks initiatives, and Bridges to Work, a joint initiative between FTA and HUD).

- Welfare Reform and Child Care. One of the most widely recognized barriers to work among welfare recipients is the accessibility and affordability of child care. Over the past few years, both federal and state funding for assistance to help low-income families meet their child care needs has increased sharply.[15] According to one report, the federal government allocated $13.8 billion in FY 1997 for child care funds, with the vast majority of this funding coming from five programs: Head Start, Child Care and Development Block Grants, Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Title XX Social Services.[16] The 1996 welfare reform legislation made four important changes affecting child care: 1) it consolidated what had previously been four separate programs into a single program—Child Care and Development Block Grant; 2) the amount of funding to states for child care was increased, by increasing the authorization for the CCDBG over its predecessor programs (up about 25 percent) and by allowing states the option to transfer up to 30% of their TANF grants to the CCDBG block grant and up to 10% of their TANF grants to the Social Services Block Grant; 3) states gained significantly increased discretion in designing and administering child care assistance (which families are eligible, which receive assistance, at what rate, what do providers get paid, quality of care, etc.); and 4) requirements that states guarantee child care to families receiving or leaving cash assistance were eliminated.[17] CCDBG was funded at $1.2 billion for FY 2000.

- Health Care. In addition to transportation and child care, another critical transitional benefit to welfare recipients as they enter the workforce is health care. Recipients

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[15] The state experience, however, varies widely. A recent GAO study of seven states reported state spending for child care in FY 1997 had increased by 24 percent over FY 1996 levels, on average, though there was substantial variation across the states, ranging from a two percent increase (Maryland) to a 62 percent increase (Louisiana). See U.S. General Accounting Office, Welfare Reform: States' Efforts to Expand Child Care Efforts (Washington, D.C.: GAO/HEHS 98-27, January 1998).

[16] April Kaplan, "Financial Resources for Child Care," Welfare Information Network Issue Notes, Vol. 2., No. 6 (April 1998). Available at http://www.welfareinfo.org/Issuechild.htm.

[17] See Mark H. Greenberg, "Child Care Policy Two Years Later," (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, March 1999) for an elaboration of these changes. Available at http://www.clasp.org.

who leave welfare for work are entitled to up to 12 months of transitional Medicaid. Their children may continue on Medicaid after this 12-month period, if the family continues to meet Medicaid income eligibility requirements. The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 authorized the creation of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which will allocate $24 billion over five years to help states expand health insurance to children in families that earn too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid, but not enough to afford private health insurance. States have three options for providing this assistance: 1) create a new children's health insurance program, 2) expand current Medicaid programs, or 3) a combination of both approaches. Data released by the U.S. Health Care Financing Administration, which administers the program, reported that nearly one million children received health care insurance during CHIP's first year.[18] In August 1998, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced it would revise its regulations to allow all states to provide Medicaid coverage to working, two-parent families who meet state income eligibility guidelines. The old rules prohibited states from providing Medicaid assistance to adults in two-parent families who worked more than 100 hours per week, regardless of their income level.

- Child Support Enforcement. During the past decade, the Federal government and the States have taken greater efforts to increase child support collections. In 19xx. The 1996 welfare reform legislation included provisions for a new child support collection system that placed increased emphasis on tracking delinquent parents across state lines. In June 1998, the Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act was signed into law, which provided tougher penalties (up to two years in prison) for delinquent parents by establishing two new felonies for parents who fail to support children living in another state or for parents that leave one state to avoid paying child support to children living in that state. In 1998, the Clinton administration reported a record collection of $14.4 billion in child support payments, which represented an increase of 80 percent over the $6.4 billion in child support collected in 1992. The number of child support cases with collections was up nearly 50 percent during this same period.

As should be clear from this brief description, the 1996 welfare reform is not your ordinary run of the mill legislative change that tinkers with a single program. Rather, welfare reform has served as a major organizing theme that has influenced the content of several pieces of legislation, which in turn, have touched nearly every major domestic department of the federal government.

The View from Below: Local Perspectives on Social Policy Change

Though many scholars and practitioners have rushed to embrace this latest iteration of the New Federalism and its emphasis on devolution, it is important to emphasize that local

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[18] Health Care Financing Administration, "Children's Health Insurance Program Reaches 1998 Target," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HCFA Press Office, April 20, 1999). Available at http://www.hcfa.gov/init/whchip11.htm.

communities are moving targets, and that in several localities, movement in the direction toward a more holistic and comprehensive response to needy families and children preceded the most recent version of federal welfare reform. In fact, some would argue that the seeds for many recent federal policy initiatives were first sown in states and localities.

Several national foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trust, to name but a few, began launching initiatives in the late 1980s designed to promote a greater integration of children and family services, and to do a better job of linking those services to larger issues of community and economic development. Though these comprehensive community initiatives varied widely along several dimensions (functional scope, geographic scope, range of partners, governance structures, etc.) they tend to share four common elements.

First, they are collaborative efforts, frequently involving participants from a variety of key sectors of the community—business, government, community-based organizations, universities, foundations, and most important, residents.

Second, they are holistic initiatives in that they focus on a variety of problems simultaneously (e.g., education, housing, economic development, social services, public safety, etc.) as opposed to treating each of these problems separately on an individual basis.

Third, they are strategic, with an emphasis on long-range strategic planning and resource mobilization within and without the community, as opposed to responding to a preconceived national intervention model.

And fourth, they are community-based, which means they typically operate from the premise that resident priorities should define and shape the activities of the collaborative effort, and many often involve "empowerment" and "self-sufficiency" as a specifically stated goal of the initiative.

Perhaps one of the most visible examples of these community building initiatives is The Atlanta Project, a private sector initiative launched by former President Jimmy Carter in October 1991.[19] The Atlanta Project, which covers twenty neighborhood clusters in parts of three counties in metropolitan Atlanta, is based on a holistic approach to a variety of poverty-related problems, such as teen pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, school dropouts, homelessness, unemployment, community and economic development and housing. The initiative is a volunteer-based effort to build coalitions in each neighborhood and to empower residents to identify their most pressing problems and design solutions to address them. In each cluster there is a full-time cluster coordinator whose primary task is to bring together neighborhood stakeholders—residents, community-based organizations, small businesses, churches, nonprofit service providers—to work together to address the problems they identify. Each neighborhood cluster has one or more corporate partners (e.g., Delta Air Lines, Coca Cola, Georgia Power, United Parcel Service, Turner Broadcasting System, several major banks) and a university partner that provide technical assistance and, in some cases, financial support for specific projects. A small central staff has also been assembled to facilitate the adoption of best practices

[19] For an overview see Micheal Giles, "The Atlanta Project: A Community-Based Approach to Solving Urban Problems," National Civic Review (Fall 1993): 354-362; Ruth Eckdish Knack, "Empowerment to the People," Planning (February 1993): 21-28; Because There Is Hope: A Report of The Atlanta Project (Atlanta: The Atlanta Project, Carter Collaboration Center, Summer 1993).

identified from a national scan of innovative urban programs to the specific problems identified in each neighborhood cluster.

Similar initiatives are underway in several other cities, though on a much smaller scale.[20] Major national foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, Casey, Pew Charitable Trusts) have been important players in providing the seed capital to get many of these initiatives off the ground. In addition, to foundation-driven collaborative problem solving models, a number of federal agencies have established programs to foster collaborative problem solving in specific substantive areas. Besides the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Initiatives mentioned earlier, these include maternal and child health (the Department of Human Services' Healthy Start program), substance abuse (the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's Neighborhood Empowerment for Prevention program), education, employment and training (the Departments of Education and Labor's School to Work initiative) and crime and juvenile delinquency (the Justice department's Operation Weed and Seed program).

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Justice identified 36 major public and private comprehensive community-based violence prevention and economic development initiatives.[21] These initiatives, which include programs administered by seven different federal departments and agencies, are underway in 49 states (all but Vermont) and the District of Columbia and include more than 250 local communities participating in at least one community-based initiative. Collaborative initiatives are also underway in several cities that trace their origins to local elected officials. These include the Phoenix Futures Forum,[22] The Providence Plan, Oakland Sharing the Vision, Municipal Federalism (Indianapolis),[23] the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program,[24] Charlotte's City Within a City initiative,[25] and Vision 2000 (Kansas City), among others.[26]

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[20] For an overview see Michael J. Rich, "Community Building and Empowerment: An Assessment of Neighborhood Transformation Initiatives in American Cities," Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Public Policy and Analysis, Washington, D.C., November 3, 1995; Nancy Fishman and Meredith Phillips, "A Review of Comprehensive, Collaborative Persistent Poverty Initiatives," Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, June 1993; Patricia Jenny, "Community Building Initiatives: A Scan of Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Programs," New York: The New York Community Trust, September 1993; Cheryl D. Hayes, Elise Lipoff, and Kristinia Smock, "Comprehensive Community Initiatives: A New Generation of Urban Revitalization Strategies," Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, Department of Sociology, 1997.

[21] U.S. Department of Justice, Matrix of Community-Based Initiatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, May 1995).

[22] John Stuart Hall and Louis F. Weschler, "The Phoenix Futures Forum: Creating Vision, Implanting Community," National Civic Review 80 (Spring 1991): 135-157.

[23] David Swindell, "Neighborhood Organizations in a Metropolitan Setting: What Good are they Anyway?" Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 1995.

[24] Susan S. Fainstein, Clifford Hirst and Judith Tennebaum, An Evaluation of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, Center for Urban Policy Research, January 1995.

[25] Del Borgsdorf, "Charlotte's City Within a City: The Community Problem-Solving Approach," National Civic Review 84 (Summer-Fall 1995): 218-224.

[26] For an overview of other approaches to engaging citizens in community-based strategic planning see International City Management Association, "Community Visioning: Citizen Participation in Strategic Planning,"

Though each of these initiatives is unique in its own way, all represent efforts by their respective cities to foster a community-based strategic planning process and strengthen relationships with neighborhood organizations. City roles have included financing the strategic planning process and all or some of the identified programs and projects, technical assistance and support to neighborhood groups engaged in the planning process, administrative support to coordinate planning and implementation activities, and project implementation.

Finally, national organizations, such as the National Civic League, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Enterprise Foundation, the National Community Development Association, and many others have also been at the forefront of promoting community-based strategic planning and collaborative problem solving. Through its Civic Assistance program, for example, the National Civic League has helped a number of cities, including Charlotte, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Phoenix, among others, in creating broad-based coalitions for action to address key issues.

Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration.

In her book, Collaborating, Barbara Gray defines collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible." She adds that "the objective of collaboration is to create a richer, more comprehensive appreciation of the problem among the stakeholders than any one of them could construct alone,"[27] and notes that collaborations generally tend to be of two types—resolving conflicts or advancing shared visions.

Gray also points out that while collaboration is a related concept, it should be distinguished from the terms cooperation and coordination, which often tend to be used interchangeably. According to Gray, "coordination refers to formal institutionalized relationships among existing networks of organizations, while cooperation is characterized by informal trade-offs and by attempts to establish reciprocity in the absence of rules.'"[28] She adds that "both cooperation and coordination often occur as part of the process of collaborating. The process by which reciprocity is established informally in the absence of rules is as important to collaboration as the formal coordination agreements that eventually emerge. Skillful management of early interactions is often crucial to continued collaboration, since these informal interactions lay the groundwork for subsequent formal interactions."[29]

David Chrislip and Carl Larson offer a similar definition:

> Collaboration goes beyond communication, cooperation, and coordination…It is a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results. Collaboration is more than simply sharing knowledge and information (communication) and more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals

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MIS Report 26, March 1994.

[27] Stakeholders are defined as "all individuals, groups, or organizations that are directly influenced by the actions others take to solve the problem." Gray, Collaborating, p. 5.

[28] Gray, Collaborating, p. 15.

[29] Gray, Collaborating, pp. 15-16.

> (cooperation and coordination). The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party."[30]

Table 1, taken from a report to the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation by Paul Mattessich and Barbara Monsey, describes more fully the differences between cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Our purpose in this paper is not to further refine the distinctions between collaboration and other forms of interorganizational relationship, but to highlight their presence in the current context of implementing welfare reform.

As Table 1 suggests, collaboration is not a static state, but rather a dynamic, evolutionary process. In *Together We Can*, a joint report issued by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in April 1993 to help communities better link education and human services to assist children and families, the authors described collaboration as a five-stage process for systems change. By systems change the authors meant "a revision of the ways that people and institutions think, behave, and use their resources to affect fundamentally the types, quality, and degree of service delivery to children and families."[31] This five-stage process for systems change consists of the following steps:

> **Stage One. Getting Together.** A small group comes together to explore how to improve services. They identify other key stakeholders, make a joint commitment to collaborate, and agree on a unifying theme. They also establish shared leadership, set basic ground rules for working together, secure initial support, and determine how to proceed.
>
> **Stage Two. Building Trust and Ownership**. Partners establish common ground. They share information about each other and community needs to create a shared vision of what a better service delivery system would look like, and they develop a mission statement and a set of goals to guide their future actions.
>
> **Stage Three. Developing a Strategic Plan**. Partners begin to explore options that flow from their common concerns and shared vision. They agree to focus on a specific geographic area, and they design a prototype delivery system that incorporates the elements of their shared vision. Partners also develop the technical tools and interagency agreements needed to put their plan into action. During this stage the group may go back to preceding stages to bring in new partners and to continue building ownership.
>
> **Stage Four. Taking Action.** Partners begin to implement the prototype. They use the information it provides to adjust the policies and practices of the organizations that comprise the prototype service delivery system. Partners design an ongoing evaluation strategy that helps them to identify specific systems-change requirements, make mid-course corrections, and measure the results.

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[30] David D. Chrislip and Carl E. Larson, Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make A Difference (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p. 5.

[31] Atelia I. Melaville, Martin J. Blank, and Gelareh Asayesh, Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1993), p. vii.

Table 1. The Elements of Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration.

Essential Elements	**Cooperation**	**Coordination**	**Collaboration**
Vision and Relationships	• basis for cooperation is usually between individuals but may be mandated by a third party • organizational missions and goals are not taken into account • interaction is on an as needed basis, may last indefinitely	• individual relationships are supported by the organizations they represent • missions and goals of the individual organizations are reviewed for compatibility • interaction is usually around one specific project or task of definable length	• commitment of the organizations and their leaders is fully behind their representatives • common, new mission and goals are created • one or more projects are undertaken for longer term results
Structure, Responsibilities & Communication	• relationships are informal; each organization functions separately • no joint planning is required • information is conveyed as needed	• organizations involved take on needed roles, but function relatively independently of each other • some project-specific planning is required • communication roles are established and definite channels are created for interaction	• new organizational structure and/or clearly defined and interrelated roles that constitute a formal division of labor are created • more comprehensive planning is required that includes developing joint strategies and measuring success in terms of impact on the needs of those served • beyond communication roles and channels for interaction, many 'levels' of communication are created as clear information is a keystone of success
Authority & Accountability	• authority rests solely with individual organizations • leadership is unilateral and control is central • all authority and accountability rests with the individual organization which acts independently	• authority rests with the individual organizations but there is coordination among participants • some sharing of leadership and control • there is some shared risk, but most of the authority and accountability falls to the individual organizations	• authority is determined by the collaboration to balance ownership by the individual organizations with expediency to accomplish purpose • leadership is dispersed, and control is shared and mutual • equal risk is shared by all organizations in the collaboration
Resources and Rewards	• resources (staff time, dollars and capabilities) are separate, serving the individual organizations	• resources are acknowledged and can be made available to others for a specific project • rewards are mutually acknowledged	• resources are pooled or jointly secured for a longer-term effort that is managed by the collaborative structure • organizations share in the products; more is accomplished jointly than could have been individually

Source: Paul W. Mattessich and Barbara R. Monsey, Collaboration: What Makes It Work (St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992), p. 40.

Stage Five. Going to Scale. Finally, partners take steps to ensure that systems-change strategies and capacities developed in the prototype are adapted, expanded, and recreated in locations throughout the community where services are needed. To do this, partners continue to develop local leadership, strengthen staff capacity through training, and build a strong constituency for change.

Susan Lloyd, who serves as director of The Collaboration Project at the MacArthur Foundation, offers a similar perspective on the evolutionary and dynamic aspects of the process of collaboration. As Lloyd notes, "five important understandings typically emerge over the course of collaboration: 1) sharing the vision, 2) recognizing the need to collaborate, 3) defining the focus and criteria for action, 4) establishing and acting through the collaboration, and 5) evaluating and transforming the collaboration."[32]

In essence, collaboration is about crafting new governance strategies to fundamentally affect the quality of life for children, families, and neighborhoods. Collaboration is about broadening participation to include all relevant stakeholders (including residents), developing a common vision, and then mobilizing all resources (public, private, nonprofit, inkind) to attain that vision. In short, collaboration seeks to achieve what Clarence Stone refers to as a "social-production model of power." As Stone notes, "in a fragmented world, the issue is how to bring about enough cooperation among disparate community elements to get things done—and to do so in the absence of an overarching command structure or a unifying system of thought. Governance requires the power to combine necessary elements for a publicly significant result."[33]

A recent report by the Center for the Study of Social Policy emphasizes the practical import of the social production model of power: "Local governance partnerships are increasing in number in part because the federal government is shifting responsibilities for human services to states—and states in turn are shifting responsibilities to the local level….The goal of devolution is not to have the same type of decisions made by different people, but to promote better decisions—better because they are more informed by the knowledge of local needs, more responsible to changes in local conditions, and more attuned to local communities' unique strengths. Local governance creates the forums in which these better decisions can be made."[34]

The Center for the Study of Social Policy identifies seven aspects of local governance that warrant emphasis. Briefly, these include the following:[35]

1. Emphasis on Outcomes. One of the essential defining characteristics of a governance partnership is its *emphasis on results*. They tend to be focused on outcomes, and driven by performance measurement to monitor progress in achieving those results;

2. Geographic Scope. Governance partnerships must walk a fine line between being small enough in scale so they can respond effectively to resident needs yet large enough

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[32] Susan Lloyd, Collaborating for Change in Chicago: A Progress Report on the Collaboration Project (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, December 1993), p. 9.

[33] Clarence N. Stone, Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1998 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), p. 227.

[34] Creating a Community Agenda: How Governance Partnerships Can Improve Results for Children, Youth and Families (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1998), p. 2.

[35] See Creating a Community Agenda, pp. 6-10 for a fuller discussion of these characteristics.

to command the attention from state, city, and county agencies. Thus, a community-wide partnership that focuses on issues of concern in several neighborhoods may be more effective that one confined to a single neighborhood. Also, in several localities—particularly in metropolitan areas—governance partnerships are emerging as a strategy for dealing with issues that cut across the boundaries of local government jurisdictions.

3. Comprehensive Strategies. A third distinguishing characteristic of local governance is its emphasis on a comprehensive approach to address the problems of needy families and neighborhoods. While single projects (health clinic) or services (extending the hours of child care providers) may be part of this strategy, the focus is on crafting a holistic strategy that engages social, economic, and physical components to improve community well-being. These elements may not necessarily be undertaken simultaneously, nor developed from scratch. Rather, a primary purpose of the governance partnership is to foster collaboration among existing networks of service providers, and to the extent feasible, nurture the development of a collaborative of collaboratives.

4. Inclusionary Decisionmaking. A central characteristic of local governance partnerships is a commitment to a process for making decisions and taking action that includes a broad range of participants—public (government agencies at the state and local, and perhaps federal, level), private sector (businesses and business associations), nonprofit (local foundations and philanthropic organizations, service providers, universities, hospitals), and the community (neighborhood and civic associations). Most important, while local governance strives to avoid making decisions based on a single point of view, effort is made to ensure that the perspective of residents is given central importance.

5. Influence on Resource Allocation Decisions. A fundamental objective of governance partnerships is to change the distribution of resources—private and nonprofit as well as public— to achieve better results for needy families and neighborhoods. Strategies for attaining this influence vary widely, ranging from a redirection of public resources to local governance entities, to the adoption of investment plans endorsed by local governance entities that guide resource allocation decisions made by public agencies, to purely advisory recommendations.

6. Legitimacy and Credibility. To be effective change agents, local governance partnerships must be perceived as legitimate and credible entities by the various constituencies whose actions and behavior they are seeking to modify to achieve better results. Legitimacy comes from formal recognition that local governance entities are indeed acting on the behalf of key stakeholders (e.g., public agencies, business interests, community institutions, etc.). Credibility comes from the trust and confidence a governance partnership earns in the community by demonstrating leadership and the capacity to get things done.

7. High-Level Commitments from State Government. A necessary condition for the attainment of systems change through local governance partnerships is that high-level state officials (e.g., governor's office, cabinet departments, state legislators) must exercise the political will needed to overcome the status quo and support new and innovative approaches to service delivery that require the devolution of decisionmaking authority and the allocation of resources to local governance partnerships.

As the above characteristics suggest, local governance partnerships, play several critical roles. They serve as a convenor and facilitator in that they "may be the only 'table' in town where all parties come together with a common mission of improving results for children, youth, and families."[36] They also play an important role as intermediary, connecting neighborhoods and communities with government agencies at all levels as well as with important resources such as businesses, nonprofit institutions, and local and national foundations and philanthropic organizations.

What does a governance partnership or collaborative look like? Would we recognize one if we saw it in action? Robert Chaskin and Sunil Garg note that while the governance structures created by comprehensive community initiatives have been designed to provide new mechanisms for coordinating the actions of a variety of key stakeholders, they nonetheless operate within the jurisdiction of local governments and "the nature of these governance structures and their relationship to formal government may be unclear."[37] Their review of several comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) found a wide and varied range in the relationship between comprehensive community initiatives and local governments: "at one end of the spectrum of government involvement are initiatives that are the products of government legislation; at the other end are initiatives operating with no formal government involvement in their operations. Between these two ends rest others with varying levels of government responsibility."[38]

Chaskin and Garg point out four types of relationships between local governance structures and local government. First, CCI governance structures may be established as parallel institutions, providing an alternative means for the provision of goods and services to local government. Typically in these cases there is little coordination or conflict between city government and the CCI, though they may both be pursuing shared goals. Second, neighborhood governance entities may play a complementary role to local government, operating as separate and independent institutions, but providing planning and services that city government does not normally provide. Third, neighborhood governance entities may take the form of a neighborhood board or citizens council that is a formal extension of the city government and plays an important role in representing the neighborhood and/or in service delivery. Finally, CCI governance structures may be developed in opposition to local government, serving largely an advocacy role to promote policies, resource allocation, and service delivery patterns that are responsive to neighborhood needs and concerns.

Many comprehensive community initiatives, on the other hand, have little or no direct relationship with city government. Thus, their success is likely to be limited because they lack the resources and authority needed to sustain the initiative and expand it to a meaningful scale. Though Chaskin and Garg focus on links between CCIs and city governments, these linkages are also relevant at higher levels of government (e.g., county and substate regional governments) and likely to be significantly more complex.

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[36] Ibid., p. 14.

[37] Chaskin and Garg, "Neighborhood Governance," p.43.

[38] Ibid.

Making Welfare Work in Georgia

Our selection of Georgia as a case study for the implementation of welfare reform is purely a matter of convenience. We live there. We have also been following the implementation of welfare reform in Georgia since 1997 as part of a national team of researchers participating in the State Capacity Project, a field network evaluation being conducted in 20 states and directed by Richard Nathan and Thomas Gais at the Rockefeller Institute of Government of the State University of New York. The State Capacity Project is focusing on how states are responding to the 1996 legislative changes, with an emphasis on how those changes have affected the ability of states to implement complex social programs such as welfare, workforce development, family and children services, and Medicaid.[39] We are also part of a network of researchers in six sites (Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and rural counties in Georgia and Mississippi) examining the impacts the spatial distribution of economic opportunities has on low-income households regarding their access to jobs and related support services. A primary emphasis of that study is an analysis of how communities have used collaborative strategies—both formal and informal—to overcome traditional barriers of policy and jurisdictional fragmentation.

As a recent edition of the *Almanac of American Politics* notes, “Georgia has emerged as the boom state of the 1990s—in population, in economy, and in spirit.” Georgia is the nation’s 10th largest state with 7.5 million residents according to the census bureau’s population estimates for 1997. The state’s 1997 population is 15.6 percent higher than that recorded in 1997, which ranks Georgia sixth overall among all states in terms of population growth, and first among states east of the Rocky Mountains. Throughout the 1990s the state’s unemployment rate has been below the rate for the nation as a whole; in 1998, Georgia’s unemployment rate was 4.2 percent compared to 4.5 for the nation.

Yet, despite the state’s overall robust performance on various growth indicators, not all areas of Georgia can be said to be experiencing boom conditions. Indeed, analysis of recent census data on population, income, and employment, suggest a more accurate picture of Georgia would be one that focuses on three Georgias—growing suburban communities, predominantly in the Atlanta metropolitan area; central cities and inner-ring suburban communities that are growing more slowly or declining, and rural areas that remain mired in deep poverty and isolated from much of the growth that others areas of the state have experienced. According to census bureau estimates of poverty rates for 1995, nearly 40 percent of Georgia counties have poverty rates higher than the state of Mississippi (21.4%), which recorded the highest poverty rate among the 50 states. Of these 62 counties, all but five are nonmetropolitan and half are counties that are completely rural with no urban population. Most of these counties are located in an area that covers roughly half the state, running diagonally from Southwestern Georgia, through Central Georgia up to the South Carolina border in Northeastern Georgia.

Though Georgia remains the only state in the South that has not elected a Republican governor since Reconstruction, Republicans have made significant gains in Georgia, particularly

[39] For an overview of the first report from the State Capacity Project see Richard P. Nathan and Thomas L. Gais, Implementing the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996: A First Look (Albany: Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York, 1999).

in the last few years. Georgia's current congressional delegation consists of eight Republicans and three Democrats in the House of Representatives and one Republican senator (Coverdell) and one Democratic senator (Cleland). At the State level, Democrats were able to hold on to the governorship in the 1998 election, which Roy Barnes won with 52.5 percent of the vote, enabling him to succeed Zell Millner who had served two terms and was not eligible to seek reelection. Democrats control both houses of the state legislature, 102-78 in the House of Representatives and 33-23 in the Senate. In both chambers the number of Republican state legislators has doubled since 1990, increasing from 11 to 23 in the Senate and 35 to 78 in the House.

In terms of local government, Georgia ranks second to Texas in terms of the number of county governments. Georgia's 159 counties range in size from 1,861 (Taliaferro County) to 718,336 (Fulton County); overall about one in four counties have a population less than 10,000 and two-thirds have populations less than 25,000. Unlike many parts of the country, counties are strong jurisdictions in Georgia and have many important service responsibilities. In the more urban counties the array of services counties provide is comparable to what cities deliver in other states. Most important, the political culture in Georgia is one in which counties play a critical role. For years counties were the basic building blocks of the General Assembly using a unit voting scheme that gave disproportionate influence to small counties. Though U.S. Supreme Court rulings led to a reapportionment of the state legislature in Georgia, as elsewhere, counties remain important political units.

Most germane to our analysis is the fact that the state's primary welfare agency—the Division of Family and Children Services in the Department of Human Resources—operates through 159 separate county DFCS offices. Though technically state employees, many counties consider these offices under their control as each department is directed by a board composed of members nominated by the County Commission and appointed by the State Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources.

The Georgia welfare reform plan follows closely the national requirements though in several instances Georgia's plan includes even stricter provisions. For example, Georgia will limit benefits to families to four years of assistance (one year less than authorized by the federal government) and welfare recipients will be required to be in some type of work activity within 24 months of receiving benefits. Those who violate the work requirements or the mandatory personal responsibility agreement (recipients must sign a "contract" with the state outlining their responsibilities as a precondition for the receipt of aid, e.g., participating in life skills classes, attending parent-teacher conferences, cooperating with authorities in establishing paternity) will have their benefits reduced by 25 percent for the first violation and be terminated from assistance for the second violation. The Georgia welfare plan also creates a family cap, denying any additional benefits to children born to families within 10 months or more of applying for assistance. Table 2 provides a brief comparison of key characteristics of Georgia's State TANF plan to the federal law, and to what previous federal policy permitted under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program.

Table 2. Comparison of Selected Characteristics of Georgia's Welfare Reform Plan to Federal Welfare Reform Legislation and Prior Federal Law.

Category	*Georgia:* *State TANF Plan*	*Federal:* *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*	*Prior Federal Law*
Funding	State Share: AFDC (FY96): $150 million TANF (FY97): $164 million Average monthly cash benefit: GA TANF GA AFDC $240 Maximum monthly TANF cash benefit for family of 3: GA $280 National (median): $379	Total TANF block grant set at $16.4 billion each year for FY 1996 – FY 2003. Federal TANF grant to GA (FY 1997): $254 million Federal State Family Assistance grant to GA: $330.7 million	Open-ended funding on a matching basis for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS), and Emergency Assistance to Needy Families (EA). Federal funding for AFDC, JOBS, and EA (FY 1996): National: $14.9 billion Georgia: $288.4 million Average monthly cash benefit: National: $374 Georgia: $240
Time Limit	Lifetime maximum of 4 years of assistance.	Lifetime maximum of 5 years of assistance.	No time limit. Recipients guaranteed assistance as long as they met program eligibility requirements.
Family Cap	Excludes children born 10 months after applying for assistance.	No provision, state option.	Families on welfare received additional AFDC benefits whenever they had another child. __ states had been granted waivers to impose family cap.
Work Requirements	Requires recipients to look for work immediately.	States must demonstrate that they will require families to work after two years of receiving assistance. A state's required work participation rate for all families is set at 25% in FY 1997, rising to 50% by FY 2002 (states will be penalized for not meeting those rates). The rate for two-parent families increases from 75% to 90% by FY 1999.	For FY 1994, 15% of non-exempt caseload was required to participate in JOBS activities for at least 20 hours per week. This increased to 20% in FY 1995.

Table 2, cont'd.

Category	*Georgia: State TANF Plan*	*Federal: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*	*Prior Federal Law*
Work Activity	Single parent household participants are required to participate a minimum of 25 hours per week (35 hours for two-parent households) in one or more of the following activities (these count towards meeting the work participation rate): unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search/job readiness (not to exceed 6 weeks), community service, vocational training (not to exceed 12 months), provision of child care to an individual who is participating in community service. If participants are meeting their required hours in primary work activities, they may participate in the following activities (these do not count towards meeting the work participation rate): secondary school or equivalent, job skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment, job search/job readiness (after 6 week limit reached), vocational training (in excess of 12 month limit), English as a second language, job readiness training independent of job search activity, college.	To count toward the work requirement, single-parent families are required to participate at least 20 hours per week (30 hours per week for two-parent families) in unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, vocational training (up to 12 months), or provide child care services to individuals who are participating in community service. After meeting the above requirements, participation may also include job skills training related to employment, education directly related to employment (only for those without high school or GED), and secondary school or GED (for those without high school or GED).	States were required to provide basic and secondary education, ESL, job skills training, job development, placement, and job readiness. States were required to offer two of the following work activities: job search, on-the-job training, work supplementation, or the community work experience. Post-secondary education was an optional activity.

Table 2, cont'd.

Category	*Georgia: State TANF Plan*	*Federal: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*	*Prior Federal Law*
Exemptions from Work Requirements	Mothers with infants 1 year or younger without childcare.	Single parents of children under age 6 who cannot find child care cannot be penalized for failure to meet work requirements. States can exempt from work requirement single parents with children under age 1.	Individuals were exempt from work requirement if they were ill, incapacitated, or aged; had a child under age 3 (or age 1 at state option), were under age 16 or in school full time; were in 2d or 3d trimester of pregnancy; were needed at home to care for ill or incapacitated family member; were employed 30 hours or more per week; resided in an area where program was not available; or were providing care to a child under 6 and child care could not be guaranteed.
Sanctions and Penalties	Sanctions may be imposed on clients who fail to meet the work requirements or fulfill the requirements of their personal responsibility agreement. A first sanction results in a 25% reduction in benefits and clients have 90 days to remedy. A second sanction results in a lifetime ban in assistance.	Various penalties can be imposed ranging up to a 21% reduction in a State's TANF grant. Reasons include: 1) failure to meet work participation rate, 2) failure to submit required reports, 3) misuse of funds, 4) failure to impose penalties requested by child support enforcement agency, 5) poor performance with respect to child support enforcement, 6) failure to enforce 5-year limit on federally-funded assistance, and 7) failure to maintain assistance to a parent who cannot obtain child care. States that are penalized must spend additional state funds to replace federal grant reductions.	If states failed to meet work participation rates the federal matching rate for JOBS spending (which generally ranged from 60%-79%) was to be reduced to 50%. In addition, states faced a reduced match unless 55% of JOBS funds were spent on specified target groups (i.e., long-term recipients, those under age 24 with no high school diploma, or those who were within two years of becoming ineligible for aid because of the age of their child). States could also be penalized if their AFDC payment error rate exceeded national standards.

Sources: Column 2 from State of Georgia TANF Plan; Columns 3 and 4 adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Comparison of Prior Law and Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) (http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/isp/reform.htm).

Georgia's welfare budget in Fiscal 2000 is about $550 million, including $337 million in federal TANF funds and $210 million in state funds. In addition, Georgia will spend about $95million on workforce development programs, of which all but about $7 million comes from federal funds. The state's welfare caseload in August 1996, when the welfare reform legislation was signed was 330,302, which ranked ninth among the 50 states. As Table 3 shows, Georgia's welfare caseload has declined by 58 percent since that date, which places the state eighth among the 50 states in terms of percentage decline in welfare caseloads.

Table 3. Ten States with Greatest Reduction in Welfare Caseloads, 1996-1999.

	TANF Recipients			*Persons below Poverty*		
State	*Recipients August 1996*	*Recipients March 1999*	*Percent Change 1996-99*	*Percent Poverty 1996*	*Percent Poverty 1997*	*Net Change 1996-97*
Idaho	21,780	2,897	-87%	11.9	14.7	2.8
Wyoming	11,398	1,770	-84%	11.9	13.5	1.6
Wisconsin	148,888	28,863	-81%	8.8	8.2	-0.6
Mississippi	123,828	38,426	-69%	20.6	16.7	-3.9
Florida	533,801	198,101	-63%	14.2	14.3	0.1
South Carolina	114,273	42,504	-63%	13.0	13.1	0.1
Colorado	95,788	39,346	-59%	10.6	8.2	-2.4
Georgia	**330,302**	**137,976**	**-58%**	**14.8**	**14.5**	**-0.3**
Maryland	194,127	89,003	-54%	10.3	8.4	-1.9
Alabama	100,662	46,934	-53%	14.0	15.7	1.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, "Change in Welfare Caseloads Since Enactment of New Welfare Law" (updated August 1999, http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/stats/aug-sept.htm) and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Poverty in the United States, 1997* (http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/povty97.html).

Collaboration in Georgia

Georgia's policy environment for social programs, particularly those that emphasize children, youth, and families, is a mixture of federal, state, and private initiatives. Georgia has embraced the collaborative model, both in terms of its use of public dollars as well as its efforts to foster partnerships with private and nonprofit organizations. In this section we review the evolution of welfare reform/workforce development policy in Georgia and set the state policy context for our analysis of local collaboration that follows.

Work First

Georgia's State TANF plan emerged as the end product of an evolutionary transformation of welfare begun about a decade ago to extend work requirements to a greater portion of the state's welfare caseload. In 1986, Georgia launched the PEACH program (Positive Employment and Community Help). Initially focused on 13 pilot counties, additional counties were added in 1989 (14), 1991 (35), 1992 (69), and the remaining counties were added in 1993. PEACH was a comprehensive employment and training program with selected support services for AFDC recipients that was carried out through a cooperative effort among the Georgia Departments of Human Resources (Division of Family and Children Services), Labor, and Technical and Adult Education, and the state's Job Training Partnership Act and 21 Community Action Agencies. Through contracts and cooperative agreements PEACH provided a broad range of education, training, and support services (e.g., transportation, child care) to move adult welfare recipients into the labor force. PEACH participants were given a variety of training and education options including GED preparation, study in an approved college or technical school, on-the-job training, work experience, and job skills training.

Though all adult welfare recipients were mandated to participate in the PEACH program, the program targeted services to three types of clients since budget constraints prohibited all eligible households to be served. These target groups were: 1) persons who received welfare for any 36 of the previous 60 months; 2) custodial parents under age 24 who have not completed high school or who have little or no work experience; and 3) members of a family where the youngest child is 16. The number of participants in the PEACH program increased from about 5,000 in FY 1987 to 25,000 in FY 1993. Overall, more than 41,000 adults participated in some type of education or training activity.

In 1995, the PEACH program was replaced by Work First, the state's new welfare-to-work program unveiled by new DFCS director Michael Thurmond. According to the Georgia Department of Human Resources, "Work First is not a program, but a change in philosophy. Work First changes the goal of welfare from income maintenance to employment. Finding a job will be the number one objective for every person who goes to the DFCS office to apply for public assistance. AFDC eligibility workers will help applicants remove barriers to employment, such as lack of child care, job training, health care or child support payments. County offices will provide job-specific training to fill open positions, and waiting rooms will have job search information."[40]

Though PEACH and Work First were very similar in approach and philosophy, there are two important differences worth pointing out. First, Work First included a work supplementation initiative and placed much more emphasis on work than the PEACH program, which was primarily an education and training program. Second, college classes would no longer be considered an allowable work activity under Work First. These differences aside, PEACH and Work First were very similar in the package of services provided to welfare clients and the manner in which those services were delivered (emphasis on collaboration among key state agencies and private employers).

Seventy-three counties were named Work First sites in July 1995 and were given greater freedom in developing their plans for moving toward a more employment-oriented service style. By January 1, 1997, when Georgia's TANF plan took effect, Work First was operating in all 159 Georgia counties.

The federal government certified Georgia's State TANF plan on January 22, 1997, and three months later, the Georgia Legislature passed Act 389, which gave legislative approval to Governor Miller's plan for welfare reform. The Georgia Department of Human Resources issued new rules for the TANF program, which were adopted by the Board of Human Resources in June 1997.

[40] Welfare Reform: Work First Initiative, Georgia Department of Human Resources Web Page, http://www2.state.ga.us/Departments/DHR/PEACH/peawork.htm.

The Georgia Work Connection

Unlike other states where Governors sought to undertake major reorganizations to better align functions and responsibilities among welfare and workforce development agencies, Georgia opted for a strategy that essentially relied on existing departments and agencies, but with an emphasis on improved coordination and integration to reduce duplication, promote more effective response, and make it easier on clients to acquire needed services.

As Georgia's welfare reform plan was unveiled during the early months of 1997, key staff from selected state departments were meeting to craft a new set of working relationships that would be needed in order to fulfill the vision embodied in the state's welfare reform plan. Elements of this new strategy were disseminated through workshops and public forums that were held during the spring and early summer of 1997. Later, in August 1997, a formal memorandum of agreement was signed by the three state agencies outlining their commitment to work together to implement welfare reform. As described in the memorandum's preamble,

> The purpose of this agreement is to encourage effective use of resources to develop Georgia's workforce through basic skills training, education, occupational training, job search skills, job development and employment referral. Further, this agreement will strengthen the departments' active partnership in developing an electronic "one stop" for the provision of workforce and human services to Georgia's citizens and employers.[41]

To carry out these objectives, a steering team consisting of top level staff from each of the three departments was formed to develop an implementation plan that would flesh out the nine essential components outlined in the memorandum of agreement. These included:

> **1. Develop and implement a common intake system**. Each of the partner agencies would develop a one-page common intake form, develop corresponding computer screens which are electronically connected, and all intake sites would emphasize work as the applicant's goal.
>
> **2. Create a common and shared assessment system**. All partner agencies would standardize the information collected at assessment as well as the formal and informal assessment tools used to collect that information. In addition, partner agencies would enter their assessment data into a linked computer system so all agencies would have access to the same information.
>
> **3. Coordinated case management**. Partner agencies will participate in the creation of an inter-organizational team approach to case management that includes a communication process for sharing case information across agencies and the participation of staff from other agencies in major decisions affecting the client (e.g., reducing/terminating TANF benefits, extending/reducing/terminating training, etc.). A team leader will oversee activities and coordinate service delivery across partner agencies.

[41] Memorandum of Understanding for Georgia's Workforce Development Partnership between the Department of Labor, Department of Human Resources, and Department of Technical and Adult Education, August 8, 1997,

4. Establish mutual work readiness criteria. Partner agencies will agree on a common set of work readiness factors (e.g., work history, education, training, life skills, etc.) and will jointly develop rating skills and assessment process for each indicator.

5. Ensure quality education and training for employment. Partner agencies will use and promote quality standards for education and training services by establishing a minimum set of competencies and instructional guidelines for education and training programs building on existing agency practices.

6. Coordinate job placement activities. The Georgia Department of Labor's Employment Services division will market all employment options (e.g., on-the-job training, work experience, subsidized employment, unsubsidized employment) in coordination with partner agencies. Partner agencies will coordinate the marketing of education and training services.

7. Secure and use employer input regarding needs. Partner agencies will work to better meet employer needs regarding the education and training of job seekers. Partner agencies will work to consolidate various employer advisory groups and focus these groups on strategies for better meeting employer training and employment needs.

8. Share information and data among partner agencies electronically. Partner agencies will share standard e-mail, word processing, and other automated systems.

9. Integration of staff and fiscal resources. The "no wrong door" philosophy of the collaborative will require cross-training staff in partner agencies so all understand the eligibility requirements and services of each agency's programs. In addition, where feasible, the collaborative will promote the use of video conferencing and co-location of staff to further promote client's universal access to workforce development programs and services.

To support these efforts, during State FY 1998, the Georgia Department of Human Resources redirected $8.3 million in TANF funds from cash assistance to the Georgia Department of Labor to purchase job search, placement and job training services for TANF clients. The contract called for 18,000 TANF clients to be placed in jobs and 40,000 TANF clients to receive training, skills assessment, and job search assistance. DHR also redirected $5.3 million in TANF funds from cash assistance to the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education to purchase education and training services for TANF clients. In addition, DHR redirected $3.5 million in TANF funds from cash assistance to hire 88 additional workers to be assigned to county DFCS offices to help coordinate child care, and $3 million was used to hire 70 workers to be placed in county DFCS offices to help TANF recipients find jobs. Also, $15 million was redirected from cash assistance to increase the number of day care slots and $7 million was reallocated from cash assistance to expand transportation services to recipients transitioning from welfare to work.

The Family Connection

At the about the same time Georgia was moving toward a more collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development, the state was also moving in a similar direction regarding programs and services for children and families.[42] This move was spurred in part by

[42] The following is summarized from Janet S. Bittner, Juanita Blount-Clark and Curtis Brantley, "Partnering

Georgia's ranking last among the 50 states in terms of the quality of life of its children according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's initial Kids Count report, a ranking based on eight indicators of child well-being (e.g., child poverty, infant mortality, school dropouts, rate of violent deaths, etc.), which was released in February 1991.

Governor Zell Miller responded by challenging key state departments (Human Resources, Education, Medical Assistance) to develop a strategy for better meeting the needs of the state's children. That same year, a local foundation, provided $5 million to help about a dozen communities work with state agencies to revise existing patterns of service delivery to promote a more responsive and effective means for helping needy families and children. Out of that effort an initiative called The Family Connection emerged which aimed to help communities establish a local collaborative, develop a strategic planning process and plan, and work with the collaborative and service providers to realign resources to focus on a more comprehensive response to the needs of families and children.

In 1993, Georgia became one of five states selected to participate in The Children's Initiative, a program of the Pew Charitable Trusts designed to help states and communities develop a new system of service delivery designed to improve outcomes for children and families. Though the Pew Charitable Trusts eventually decided not to go forward with the initiative, five Georgia communities participated in a community-based collaborative strategic planning process (Atlanta/Fulton County, Savannah/Chatham County, DeKalb County, Murray County, and Ware County) and in 1994 the state issued its strategic plan developed through the Pew initiative which set forth a new vision for serving families and children and a 10-year plan for achieving that vision.

In 1995, legislation was passed to establish the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families. In addition to leaders drawn from business, local government, civic and religious organizations, and child and family advocacy groups, the 19-member council also included agency directors from the state Departments of Children and Youth Services, Education, Human Resources, Medical Assistance, and the Office of Planning and Budget. One of the first actions the new Council took was the creation of a series of 26 benchmarks grouped into five categories (Healthy Children, Children Ready for School, Children Succeeding in School, Strong Families, and Self-Sufficient Families) that would serve as performance indicators of state and local progress toward meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the 1994 strategic plan. One of the benchmarks included in the latter category was "increase the percentage of welfare recipients leaving public assistance because of employment or higher incomes." The Family Connection initiative was brought under the Policy Council to work with individual communities to provide leadership training, technical assistance and support needed to develop and implement the plans and strategies needed at the local level to help carry out the intentions of the state's strategic comprehensive plan for children and families.

Additional counties beyond the initial dozen were phased into the Family Connection in phases in subsequent years. Each county received $50,000 in planning and technical assistance, and once approved, received additional state funding to help implement their plan. As of January 1999, 130 of the state's 159 counties were participants in the Family Connection, with the remaining counties scheduled to be brought into the initiative during State FY 2000.

With Georgia Communities to Improve the Well-Being of Children and Families," Georgia Academy Journal (Winter 1996): 9-12.

In summary, several points warrant emphasis. First, welfare reform was not a sudden policy shock in Georgia. The state had already been moving in the direction of national policy well before President Clinton signed the welfare reform bill in August 1996. Indeed by December 1996, Georgia DFCS director Michael Thurmond told state legislators that the state's Work First initiative, along with the state's strong economy, had resulted in a decline of nearly 70,000 from the state's welfare rolls in two years.[43] These trends, continued following the signing of welfare reform legislation. Second, the seeds of collaboration had already been sown in the state prior to the enactment of national welfare reform legislation in 1996. The state's primary agencies in the areas of human resources, workforce development, and technical education, had a history of working together, and several foundation-initiated efforts to promote a more collaborative approach in the area of family and children services were underway. Third, as Figure 1 attempts to illustrate, the combination of national, state, and locally-driven change initiatives resulted in an extremely complex environment that gives new meaning to the phrase, why is welfare so hard to reform?

A Tale of Two Communities: Implementing Welfare Reform in Metro Atlanta and Rural Georgia

In this section we present brief case analyses of the implementation of the Georgia Work Connection in two substate areas, one urban (metropolitan Atlanta) and one rural (Crisp and Dooly Counties in Southwest Georgia). Our analysis is guided by three primary questions: 1) how well have the goals and objectives of the state's Work Connection collaboration among the Departments of Human Services, Labor, and Technical and Adult Education been translated to the field, both at the regional and local community level; 2) to what extent have regional and local Work Connection collaborations extended their reach to include participants other than the three primary state agencies; and 3) to what extent have local Work Connection collaborations extended beyond local government boundaries (i.e., counties, cities) to direct a more regional approach to attacking the challenge of moving people from welfare to work to self-sufficiency?

Metropolitan Atlanta

Demographic and Economic Context. Throughout the past decade the Atlanta region has ranked near the top in terms of population and employment growth. Given the region's thriving economy, prospects for welfare reform should be bright, assuming of course, that welfare recipients who must move from dependency to self-sufficiency within a four-year time span can get to the available job opportunities. It also assumes that once they get to those jobs that they have the levels of education and work experience employers are seeking. It also assumes that once they obtain a job, they can keep it, and that the job pays an adequate wage to sustain a family.

Our initial focus is metropolitan Atlanta, a 20-county area as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census with a population of about 3.6 million in 1997, which places Atlanta 11th among all metropolitan areas in terms of population size. The city of Atlanta, with about 400,000 residents according to 1996 population estimates, is the nation's 36th largest city. Thus, about one out of

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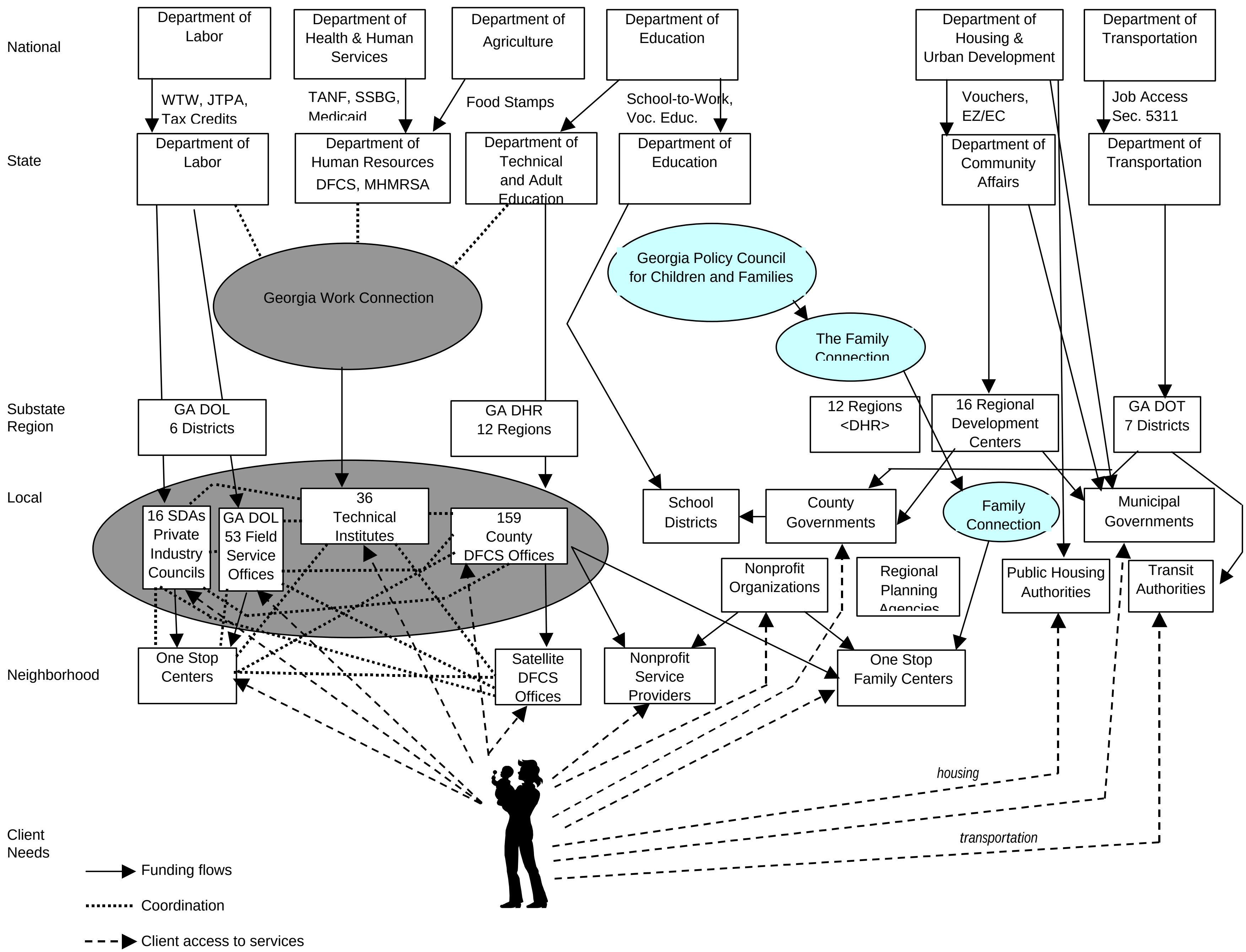
[43] Peter Mantius, "Hopefuls for Welfare Sent on Job Search," Atlanta Journal Constitution (10 December 1996): C3.

Figure 1. Why Welfare is So Hard to Reform: The Welfare Reform/Workforce Development Policy Context in Georgia



ten (11.6%) metro area residents live in the city of Atlanta today compared to about 40 percent in 1960.

The Atlanta metropolitan area population has increased by nearly 23 percent since 1990, which makes the Atlanta MSA the nation's 14th fastest growing metropolitan area overall, and second fastest growing among all metropolitan areas with a population of one million or more. The Atlanta MSA includes three of the nation's ten fastest growing counties (Forsyth, Henry, and Paulding). Overall, 12 of the 20 Atlanta MSA counties had population growth rates of 30 percent or higher between 1990 and 1997 with the greatest growth occurring in the nine counties comprising the outer ring of the metropolitan area. All but one of these outer ring counties (Cherokee) have populations less than 100,000 and seven of the nine counties in this group have populations less than 70,000. On the other hand, the core counties of DeKalb (portion of the city of Atlanta), Fulton (most of the city of Atlanta), and Clayton had growth rates between eight and thirteen percent, rates that would typically signify moderate to strong growth in most northeastern and midwestern metropolitan areas, but reflect only relatively modest rates in comparison to the growth experienced by other counties in the greater Atlanta region.

The Atlanta metropolitan region is spread across more than 5,100 square miles with an overall population density in 1997 of 678 persons per square mile. Population density drops off sharply as one moves away from the region's center: density is approximately 3,000 persons per square mile in the city of Atlanta, 1,500 persons per square mile in the five urban core counties, 400 in the suburban counties, and about 225 persons per square mile in the nine counties at the fringe of the metropolitan region. These settlement patterns pose serious challenges for mobility within the region—residents of Atlanta drive more miles per capita per day (34 based on 1994 data) than residents of any other metropolitan region, which is partly accounted for by the fact that public transportation is confined to the two central counties of Fulton and De Kalb. The average round trip work commute in the Atlanta region is 30 miles a day and that commute costs about $67 per week or $3,500 per year.[44]

The metropolitan Atlanta regional economy has served as the economic engine that has propelled Georgia to become the fastest growing state east of the Rocky Mountains. The Atlanta metropolitan region has ranked among the leaders in job growth in each of the past several years and has consistently appeared at or near the very top of several rankings of business climate published by a variety of organizations. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Atlanta ranked 11th among the nation's 30 largest metropolitan areas in terms of nonagricultural employment in 1990, with 1.48 million jobs. Atlanta ranked third, behind Washington, D.C., and Houston, in terms of the metropolitan area's projected gain in employment (about 322,000 jobs) over the next decade (1995-2005), according to a recent forecast conducted by Woods and Poole Economics based on census data. Atlanta also ranked third in terms of net population gain (615,560) during this same period.[45]

Although the Atlanta metropolitan area has several major manufacturing facilities (e.g., Ford and General Motors automobile assembly plants, Lockheed aircraft center), manufacturing does not play a significant role in the metropolitan area economy. What is driving the Atlanta economy is its services sector, and that portion of the economy is being lead by trade and

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[44] Atlanta Regional Commission, "Commuting Facts and Figures," July 30, 1997.

[45] Diane Crispell, "The Hottest Metros," American Demographics (April 1995), p. 4.

transportation. Atlanta leads all major metropolitan areas in terms of the share of employment in those two sectors. Overall, employment in the Services sector accounts for more than one in three jobs in metropolitan Atlanta in 1996 (Table 4).

During the past two decades there has been a dramatic decentralization of employment in the Atlanta metropolitan area, resulting in the emergence of a multi-nodal metropolitan area with several employment centers located throughout the region. Although employment in the city of Atlanta has steadily increased from about 322,000 persons in 1970 to 356,000 in 1980 to 391,000 in 1990, the city's share of regional employment has dropped sharply, from 55 percent in 1970 to 29 percent in 1990, due to the much more rapid employment growth in outlying suburban areas, particularly Atlanta's northern suburbs.[46] During this same period the Atlanta central business district's share of employment declined by one half, dropping from 15 percent in 1970 to 7.5 percent in 1990. A recent report by Research Atlanta concludes that the two most important factors contributing to the decentralization of employment in the Atlanta metropolitan area over the past decades were the decentralization of population (jobs following people) and the expansion of firms already located in the suburbs as opposed to outmigration of jobs from the central city or new businesses locating in the region.[47] Another recent study that examined the spatial mismatch between job opportunities and the geographic location of TANF households in metropolitan Atlanta in March 1997 found that only three of every one hundred jobs advertised in the Atlanta Journal Constitution were jobs that were entry-level (high school degree or less, six months or less work experience), paid $15,000 or more per year, and were accessible by public transportation.[48]

Demographically, Atlanta is largely a region in black and white. Overall, the 1990 decennial census reported that 70 percent of metro Atlanta residents were white, 25.8 percent were black, 1.8 percent Asian, and 2 percent were of Hispanic origin. While about one out of five metropolitan area residents are nonwhite according to 1996 census estimates, the nonwhite population is largely confined to the city of Atlanta where nearly 70 percent of the population is black, and portions of Clayton, DeKalb and Fulton counties. The core counties of Cobb and Gwinnett, along with all four counties in the Suburban Ring, are predominantly white as is most of the population in the group of counties at the fringe of the Atlanta metropolitan area (Table 4).

The incidence of poverty and associated problems (e.g., low income, educational attainment, participation in the labor force, etc.) in metropolitan Atlanta follows a fairly familiar pattern found in many metropolitan areas. The areas of greatest need are concentrated in the central city and a few inner-ring suburban communities with conditions improving dramatically as one moves away from the central core. In metropolitan Atlanta, however, there are several communities in the outer fringes of the metropolitan region where social and economic conditions are comparable to those found in the central city.[49] For example, one out of three

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[46] Ibid. See also Gary Orfield and Carol Ashkinaze, The Closing Door: Conservative Policy and Black Opportunity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[47] Hartshorn and Ihlanfeldt, The Dynamics of Change, p. 59.

[48] Joseph Coughlin and Michael J. Rich, "The Spatial Distribution of Economic Opportunities: Access and Accessibility Issues for Welfare Households in Metropolitan Atlanta," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers, Boston, MA, March 28, 1998.

[49] Table 4 only lists demographic and economic characteristics for the 10 counties included within the

Table 4. Selected Characteristics of Metro Atlanta Counties.

	State of Georgia	*Metro Atlanta Counties*	*Central Counties: Fulton County*	*Central Counties: DeKalb County*	*Cobb County*	*Cherokee County*	*Gwinnett County*	*Rockdale County*	*Henry County*	*Clayton County*	*Fayette County*	*Douglas County*
Population (thousands), 1998	7,642	3,026	739	594	566	134	522	68	105	209	89	90
Percent population change, 1990-98	18.0	23.9	14.0	8.7	26.5	49.1	47.9	26.3	78.2	15.2	42.0	26.3
Percent White, 1996	69.8	78.2	44.6	50.4	85.9	96.9	89.6	89.0	86.9	69.3	90.9	89.7
Percent Black, 1996	28.2	19.0	53.4	45.1	11.1	2.2	5.8	9.3	12.0	26.2	6.3	9.2
Percent Hispanic, 1996	2.5	2.8	2.9	4.1	3.4	2.0	4.0	1.8	1.3	3.2	2.7	1.8
Income, Poverty, Unemployment, Education												
Median household income, 1995	33,623	47,901	35,932	38,189	50,018	53,091	54,083	46,925	50,410	36,379	66,080	44894
Percent persons below poverty, 1995	15.6	9.6	20.9	15.7	7.4	6.2	5.2	8.1	6.3	13.3	3.5	8.8
Percent unemployed, 1997	4.5	3.7	4.6	4.4	3.0	2.4	2.6	3.2	2.7	4.1	2.4	3.1
Percent 25 years and older, 1990												
Not completing high school	29.1	19.6	22.2	16.1	14.2	24.8	13.3	22.3	27.1	22.8	13.5	27.7
With 4 or more years of college	19.3	23.8	31.6	32.7	33.0	18.4	29.6	18.1	10.7	14.7	25.8	12.0
Economy												
Paid Employees (thousands), March 1996	3037	1596	632	314	249	22	229	28	21	77	25	22
Percent manufacturing, 1996	5.5	5.0	3.5	4.7	4.2	7.0	5.5	6.6	4.5	4.4	4.4	5.9
Percent retail trade, 1996	20.4	18.9	16.7	18.4	18.2	16.1	16.3	19.9	21.7	24.5	18.0	22.4
Percent services, 1996	33.6	34.1	44.6	40.3	37.1	28.5	34.3	29.5	28.3	31.1	32.8	31.2
Percent change, 1993-1996	14.6	17.1	14.1	11.3	17.5	37.7	29.2	29.1	38.0	12.5	43.8	30.0
TANF Caseload												
Total number of cases, Feb 1999	57,882	16,750	9,499	3,701	828	134	657	185	203	1,444	99	331
Percent of cases with adult included	58.2	21.2	67.1	51.3	33.8	29.1	49.0	40.5	35.0	52.8	48.5	51.4
Percent change, Jan 97 - Feb 99	-49.8	-53.7	-48.7	-59.0	-66.0	-61.7	-54.6	-52.7	-49.9	-56.0	-53.5	-56.7
Race and Ethnicity												
Percent White	16.9	9.1	2.4	4.3	33.2	82.1	39.4	45.3	66.2	27.2	54.2	63.5
Percent Black	81.9	33.0	97.2	93.7	62.1	12.8	46.0	52.0	31.0	68.1	43.8	34.7
Percent Hispanic	0.8	0.9	0.2	0.8	2.5	2.6	9.9	1.3	1.4	2.2	2.1	0.0
Employment Status												
Percent employed	12.9	4.3	8.0	8.3	8.6	15.4	15.3	14.7	23.9	7.7	12.5	15.3
Percent unemployed, looking for work	67.1	24.6	72.2	57.8	62.5	46.2	40.6	33.3	52.1	61.0	20.8	60.0
No. of Months on TANF (since Jan 97)												
Percent 25-26 months	36.9	13.4	46.4	37.2	22.9	20.5	18.9	20.0	21.1	28.9	14.6	17.1
Average no. of months on TANF	16.7	6.5	18.5	16.3	13.9	11.9	13.1	12.0	12.3	14.9	11.8	12.0

Sources: The Georgia County Guide, 1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census; Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services.

residents in the urban fringe counties did not complete high school according to the 1990 census, which is a higher rate than that recorded by the city of Atlanta. Also, the median household income in several of these outer ring counties is only slightly higher than the Atlanta city median household income.

The Administrative Geography of Welfare Reform and Workforce Development. Atlanta, like many other large metropolitan areas, is carved up into a number of overlapping spheres of policymaking and administrative authority that pose a formidable challenge for designing and implementing this new style of comprehensive, collaborative, community building.[50] For example, as noted earlier the Atlanta metropolitan area is comprised of 20 counties, which are meaningful units of local government in Georgia and have many important service responsibilities. Yet, there is wide variation across the Atlanta metro area in terms of county government organization: many operate on a traditional commission form of government, others rely on a county-manager form of government, and DeKalb County has an elected county executive. Thus, when "counties" get together, it is not at clear that comparable officials are convening with one another.

Also as noted above, in Georgia the state's welfare reform initiative is administered by county Departments of Children and Family Services, which are hybrid state/county entities. Each county has a social services board that oversees its DFCS office and makes a recommendation on hiring the county DFCS director. Most county DFCS offices are staffed by state employees and it is not unusual in some of the larger counties for additional staff to be supported with county funds. The county DFCS offices are bound by state law and regulations, though tensions often emerge between the state and the county DFCS offices over who really is in control.

The major organizational entity for administering employment and training programs at the local level is the Service Delivery Area. SDAs are geographic areas designated by the governor to receive federal job training funds. They are the primary recipient of funds under the federal Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) and the Clinton administration's new $3.0 billion Welfare to Work initiative. Each SDA is required to have a board appointed by local elected officials to guide and oversee the SDA's job training programs. These boards, known as Private Industry Councils, are designed to forge a partnership with the private sector in the design and management of employment and training programs. Though PIC boards may consist of representatives from a variety of sectors—business, education, labor, social service agencies, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, etc.—a majority of board members must come from the business community and the PIC chairperson must be a business representative. The 18 counties in metropolitan Atlanta are distributed among seven separate SDAs. The city of Atlanta comprises one SDA, DeKalb County a second, the Metropolitan

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jurisdiction of the Atlanta Regional Commission.

[50] On comprehensive, collaborative community building initiatives see Prudence Brown, "Comprehensive Neighborhood-Based Initiatives," Cityscape 2 (May 1996): 161-176 and Michael J. Rich and Micheal Giles, "City Halls and Community Organizations: Partnerships for Reducing Poverty," Background paper prepared for the Project Advisory Committee Meeting, Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, October 6-7. For a more historic look at these issues see Robert Halpern, Rebuilding the Inner City: A History of Neighborhood Initiatives to Address Poverty in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Atlanta SDA includes eight counties, and the eight remaining counties are divided up among four separate SDAs.

The Atlanta Regional Commission, whose jurisdiction includes 10 of metropolitan Atlanta's 18 counties, serves as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning and programming purposes. The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority is the Atlanta region's primary public transit provider, though MARTA only provides bus and rail service to Fulton and DeKalb counties.[51]

Profile of the TANF Caseload. As of February 1999, the most recent period for which data are available, nearly one out of three (29%) TANF cases in Georgia were located in the Atlanta metropolitan area (10-county area covered by the Atlanta Regional Commission). Nearly eight out of ten (79%) of these cases were located in the central counties of Fulton and DeKalb, which include the city of Atlanta. However, it is important to point out that while we often associate welfare as a city problem, there are more TANF households in metropolitan Atlanta living outside the city of Atlanta than within the city limits. Based on our geocoding of TANF caseload data for March 1997, only about four out of ten TANF households in metropolitan Atlanta were located inside the city of Atlanta.[52] Overall, TANF caseloads in metropolitan Atlanta have declined at a slighter greater rate than that recorded for the state as a whole between January 1997 and February 1999 (-53.7% vs. –49.8%). Nine of the 10 counties in the region had caseload declines greater than the statewide rate; Fulton County's caseload decline was about one percentage point less than the statewide rate.

The Georgia Work Connection. As Georgia's welfare reform initiative was being rolled out in the Spring of 1997, two notable developments emerged. First, several state agencies came together in a historic and unprecedented collaborative effort. Second, there was extensive outreach to the private sector. While these efforts were intended to operate statewide, much of the initial activity focused on metropolitan Atlanta, in part due to its sizable share of the state's caseload and due to proximity as Atlanta is Georgia's state capital.

As described above, Georgia's collaborative was formalized in August 1997 when the commissioners of three state departments signed a memorandum of understanding. One of the primary objectives of the collaborative initiative is to co-locate Labor and DTAE personnel within county DFCS offices to provide a more seamless delivery of services.

To develop greater ties with the private sector, then DFCS director Michael Thurmond (currently Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Labor, a statewide elected office) approached The Atlanta Project in early 1997 to request their assistance in helping to connect the state's welfare reform efforts with the private sector, specifically in the form of commitments for jobs, training, and support in pushing for systems change. The Atlanta Project agreed to

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[51] Voters in both Cobb and Gwinnett counties have rejected referenda that would have extended MARTA service to their areas.

[52] Only about one out of ten metropolitan TANF households (one out of four city of Atlanta TANF households) live inside the boundaries of Atlanta's Empowerment Zone, a cluster of 23 contiguous census tracts all with poverty rates of 35 percent or higher. Overall, more than half of the residents living inside Atlanta's EZ had incomes below the poverty level in 1989 based on census data. These data suggest while there are certainly concentrations of TANF households, the overall TANF population is more dispersed throughout the metropolitan area than commonly believed.

Thurmond's request and made welfare-to-work one of the four areas it would concentrate on during the second phase of its initiative. TAP established a partnership among several public and private organizations interested in meeting the employment needs of TAP residents, and began working with Georgia DFCS and Labor department officials to design an effective intake, assessment, and placement system that connects employers with job openings to residents who need a job. TAP sponsored several public briefings that served as a forum for state officials to recruit private sector participation in their workforce development efforts. At the first forum, nearly 60 businesses with more than 900 job openings expressed interest in hiring welfare recipients.

The experience to date, however, has been fraught with frustration as only 154 people were hired out of the 1,278 people referred from local welfare offices to the participating businesses.[53] The TAP coordinator for the initiative noted that there were a number of reasons why employers hired fewer people than they originally intended: "Many don't show up [for interviews]. Many who do, fail the drug screen or don't meet the job qualifications. One of the problems is that many clients being referred [by DFACS] are in job search without the necessary screening."[54] Despite these shortcomings, there have been examples of success. The Centers for Disease Control, a federal agency headquartered in Atlanta, for example, hired 53 welfare recipients—11 more than originally intended—and of that group, only two didn't work out. Much of the success to the CDC hires has been attributed to the CDC's willingness to take on responsibility for worker readiness, life skills, and job mentoring, services many companies are unable or unwilling to provide.

These frustrations reflect in part the challenge of meeting client needs in a policy (and local political) environment that is extremely fragmented and disconnected. The Georgia Work Connection sought to tackle that fragmentation head on, and early returns—based on our interviews with more nearly 40 officials in metropolitan Atlanta counties (DFCS, Labor, and DTAE officials, executive directors of nonprofit organizations)—suggest that the results have been mixed.

As will be discussed more fully in the statewide analysis, many of the officials we spoke with noted the state had not done a very good job of communicating the basic goals and objectives of the Georgia Work Connection to local officials, particularly those at the front lines of welfare reform. As one county DFCS director noted, "while the Work Connection is working well now in her county, it did not filter down far enough quickly enough." She noted that "because line-level employees and case managers were not included in conferences and training, it has taken about two years for the objectives of the Work Connection to translate to the local level, between all three partner agencies." She added that this in turn "led to frequent complaints back and forth between partner agencies because of this lack of understanding. For example, DFCS was not sending clients to other agencies and other partners were not doing anything with the clients DFCS did send."

The vast majority of officials we spoke with indicated that from their perspective, there was no sense of regionalism being fostered by the Work Connection. As one local workforce

[53] Christy Oglesby, "Welfare-to-Work Initiative Falling Short," Atlanta Journal Constitution, March 1, 1998, p. G8.

[54] Ibid.

development agency official reported, “there has been no increased sense of regionalism as a result of welfare reform. It’s difficult to plan on a regional level because TANF is administered by county agencies. Also, in Fulton County, there are many agencies and each of them operates differently. Across counties, even within them, there are different needs so regional meetings really don’t help. Cherokee County and South Fulton County have very different needs and are in different situations with respect to client populations and work opportunity patterns. Our Private Industry Council serves nine counties. People do not attend the regional meetings.”

One regional coordinator for one of the three partner agencies in the Work Connection, who pointed out that his region is larger than 14 states, noted that “in Atlanta, there are so many players it is hard to collaborate. The regional directors and county directors understand the objectives of Work Connection but below the county directors, no one knows.” He added that “the more components you put into a large system, the more difficult it is to get them to function together. It really is rocket science.”

Though there are several issues that could be more effectively addressed on a regional basis, the Work Connection has thus far made little progress in fostering that dialogue. Two big regional issues concern access to jobs and transportation, which are closely intertwined. As noted earlier, there is considerable variation across the counties in metropolitan Atlanta in terms of the number (and type) of job openings and the size (and skills and resources) of the TANF population. One fairly severe mismatch is the concentration of TANF households in the central counties of Fulton and DeKalb and the clustering of job opportunities in the suburban areas in the northern part of the metropolitan area (Cobb, North Fulton, and Gwinnett counties). For example, the Mall of Georgia (the state’s largest and second largest mall in the Southeast) recently opened in Gwinnett County and the vast majority of people who will end up working there are not likely to come from Gwinnett County. There has been some criticism that because of transportation barriers (Gwinnett is outside the reach of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority), not enough TANF recipients were able to acquire employment at the new mall. Further, one official we spoke with noted to us that both Cobb County and Gwinnett County were requesting separate RFPs to bid on the Department of Human Resource’s Unified Transportation Plan, which was intended to serve the entire metropolitan area.

Yet, despite these setbacks, there are a few examples of where regional strategies have emerged. Perhaps the most notable is the $1.8 million Job Access and Reverse Commute grant recently awarded to the Atlanta Regional Commission. These funds will be used to offer new and expanded MARTA bus service, establish small van service to employment centers in South Fulton County and Clayton County, and provide shuttle service between selected MARTA rail stations and major employment centers. The ARC has more than a dozen partners in this initiative including state and county agencies participating in the Work Connection, The Atlanta Project, the Fulton County and City of Atlanta housing authorities, the Atlanta Empowerment Zone, and the City of Atlanta.

Thus, in metropolitan Atlanta, the Work Connection collaboratives that have emerged to date have largely been at the county level, and the structure, scope, and level of development varies widely across counties. In most counties there is a relatively good working relationship among the three main partner agencies in the Work Connection, which most respondents attributed to previously existing relationships that date back to the PEACH program. Several officials also reported that the collaboratives in their counties had made reasonably good progress toward extending the collaboration to include outside partners, such as other state and local agencies, other collaborative efforts such as the Family Connection, and nonprofit service providers. In a few counties relationships with outside partners were especially strong.

For example, in one county there is a close working relationship between the Work Connection and the Family Connection. The County DFCS office co-pays for an employee to be on-site at a Family Connection facility to work on child care issues. The DFCS office has also asked the Family Connection to review applications for county funds from community-based nonprofit organizations to ensure that DFCS-funded programs are consistent with the benchmarks established by the Family Connection. In another county, DFCS officials meet weekly with officials from the technical schools, the labor department field offices, and the Private Industry Council, and the county DFCS agency has direct, local-level memorandums of understanding with each agency.

At the other extreme, a Fulton County DFCS official noted that "the Work Connection has no real structure. Partner agencies do not meet regularly, and on the few occassions when they do, the other agencies send representatives to meetings that don't have the authority to make decisions." A nonprofit official in that same county reported that "the Work Connection has a name but no known function." She added she can attain their meetings, but when she does, she feels excluded and that her presence is ancillary. State agencies have not been very welcoming to nonprofit partners." Another nonprofit official in Fulton County pointed out that a major barrier has been the "lack of a spirit of cooperation. There is mistrust and suspicion on the part of the nonprofits towards the government agencies that the latter have not done enough to address." She also noted that "most nonprofits in the county understand welfare reform but do not want to participate in it because of mistrust and bureaucratic inflexibility."

In summary, though Atlanta has several major initiatives underway that directly touch on issues of workforce development and welfare reform (e.g., Empowerment Zones, Welfare to Work grant, The Atlanta Project, School to Work, etc.), there has been little progress in coordinating these efforts or linking them to the Work Connection collaboration. Part of this can be attributed to the factors noted above (numbers of agencies and organizations, scope and focus of efforts, lack of trust, sending representatives without the clout and authority to speak for the agency, etc.). In addition, during the past year federal audits have raised a number of questions about the management of the city's Empowerment Zone and its job training programs, and the capacity of the administering entities to carry out these federally-funded programs.[55]

On the other hand, there is evidence from several counties within the region that the Work Connection approach is working well in their communities. The challenge that remains is two-fold: 1) how to foster greater linkages and relationships among counties in metropolitan Atlanta, particular in areas of common interest and need such as access to jobs and transportation; and 2) how to connect the city of Atlanta (and to a certain extent Fulton County) into the greater metropolitan area.

During the past year there has been unprecedented discussion (and action) on regionalism issues in the Atlanta metropolitan area, due largely to the federal government's moratorium on funding highway projects that was imposed because the region is not in compliance with federal clean air standards. As a result, the business community began to mobilize on a regional basis to

[55] See Carrier Teegardin, "Federal Funds in Atlanta: Squandering Uncle Sam's Investment," Atlanta Journal Constitution, 12 July 1998.

examine solutions, one of which led to Governor Barnes' proposal and the state legislature's adoption of a new regional transportation agency that would have substantial powers over transportation and land use planning in Atlanta (and other counties that may subsequently fail to meet clean air standards). Whether this same enthusiasm for regional solutions can be transferred to welfare reform and workforce development issues remains to be seen.

Crisp and Dooly Counties

Demographic and Economic Context. Though welfare policy is frequently regarded as a response to inner-city poverty, the 1996 legislative changes required states to institute these reforms statewide, meaning a similar set of policy prescriptions would be applied to both urban and rural areas. Consequently, the experiences of rural as well as metropolitan counties with TANF, the Welfare to Work program, and the Workforce Investment Act, will need to be explored in greater detail to obtain a more complete picture of the challenges of moving people from welfare to work to economic self-sufficiency. A recent report by the Rural Policy Research Institute presents preliminary evidence that shows that rural, urban, and suburban areas do indeed function in significantly diverse policy contexts and are experiencing different outcomes.[56] Taking a closer look at the experiences of Crisp and Dooly counties in Southwest Georgia then, should provide a more vivid exploration of the unique opportunities and challenges that rural areas face in collaborating to achieve the goals of welfare reform.

Crisp and Dooly counties are located approximately 130 miles south of Atlanta and are just east of the more well-known and tourist-friendly "Jimmy Carter Country" region of the state, with Plains (Carter's hometown) and Americus (the base for Habitat for Humanity International) nearby. To some extent, Crisp and Dooly are fairly similar to other counties in the Southwest Georgia region, particularly in terms of demographics and economic characteristics. The numerous collaborative efforts underway and available resources for welfare reform and family self-sufficiency, however, distinguish these counties from their neighbors—especially, the area's designation as one of the nation's few rural Empowerment Zones. Both the economic and broader policy contexts of Crisp and Dooly create many of the barriers and opportunities that local officials face in implementing welfare policy using a collaborative service delivery model.

Like most of rural America, both of these counties appear to have missed out on the phenomenal growth and economic boom experienced just a few hours north in Atlanta. According to 1998 Census estimates, Dooly County has a population of 10,388 residents and has lagged behind the rest of the state in terms of population growth over the past eight years (4% vs. 18%). Most residents live in the county seat of Vienna or Unadilla, at the northern tip of the county. Crisp County is significantly larger than Dooly, with 20,725 residents and has grown by only 5 percent since 1990. The town of Cordele, the Crisp county seat and self-proclaimed "Watermelon Capital of the World," has experienced a slight decline (2%) in population since 1990. Both counties have unemployment rates that are nearly twice as great as the statewide rate and median household incomes only about two-thirds as great as the statewide figure (Table 5). Consequently, poverty rates are high: 29.3 percent in Crisp (6th highest among Georgia's 159

[56] "Rural America and Welfare Reform: An Overview Assessment," Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, Rural Policy Research Institute, February 1999. Available at http://www.rupri.org.

Table 5. Selected Characteristics of Crisp and Dooly Counties.

	State of Georgia	*Crisp County*	*Dooly County*
Population (thousands), 1998	7,642	21	10
Percent population change, 1990-98	18.0	3.6	4.9
Percent White, 1996	69.8	55.2	46.9
Percent Black, 1996	28.2	44.4	52.5
Percent Hispanic, 1996	2.5	0.5	1
Income, Poverty, Unemployment, and Education			
Median household income, 1995	33,623	23,223	20,961
Percent persons below poverty, 1995	15.6	29.3	27.8
Percent unemployed, 1997	4.5	7.2	8.0
Percent 25 years and older, 1990			
Not completing high school	29.1	43.8	45.3
With 4 or more years of college	19.3	10.0	9.5
Economy			
Paid Employees (thousands), March 1996	3,037	8	3
Percent manufacturing, 1996	5.5	6.7	4.6
Percent retail trade, 1996	20.4	29.6	22.7
Percent services, 1996	33.6	27.8	20.2
Percent change, 1993-1996	14.6	13.7	40.2
TANF Caseload			
Total number of cases, Feb 1999	57882	467	172
Percent of cases with adult included	58.2	69.4	61.0
Percent change, Jan 97 - Feb 99	-49.8	-40.4	-18.9
Race and Ethnicity			
Percent White	16.9	13.6	11.4
Percent Black	81.9	86.4	87.6
Percent Hispanic	0.8	0.0	1.0
Employment Status			
Percent employed	12.9	12.0	10.5
Percent unemployed, looking for work	67.1	77.2	66.7
No. of Months on TANF (since Jan 97)			
Percent 25-26 months	36.9	44.8	24.8
Average no. of months on TANF	16.7	18.4	15.5

Sources: *The 1998 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population and poverty estimates, *County Business Patterns*; Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services, "A Snapshot of TANF Families, February 1999."

counties) and 27.8 percent in Dooly County (13th highest overall). Perhaps most telling, nearly half of the adult population of 25 years or older had not completed high school based on 1990 census reports.

The types of industries in the two counties vary somewhat. The top three employers in Dooly County are Georgia Pacific, Oxford Industries, and Red Kap Industries and the top employers in Crisp County are Cordele Uniform, Masonite Corporation, and the Sero Company. The job prospects for welfare recipients, in contrast, are overwhelmingly concentrated in the low-skill service sector, which typically offers minimum wage salaries. Tyson Chicken, which opened a processing plant in Dooly County about three years ago, is the primary employer of TANF clients in both counties. In Dooly County, Georgia Pacific has been an employer for more highly skilled welfare recipients who have completed training through vocational schools. Dooly's DFCS office has also set up some work supplementation or subsidized employment for 8 TANF recipients working on a new rest area construction project along I-75. A local waste recycling plant and a paper mill in Crisp County have been hiring welfare recipients as well. Other private sector partners in Crisp that have helped TANF clients find employment are the Crisp Regional Hospital and the Cordele Chamber of Commerce. The Empowerment Zone (EZ) office in Cordele has also provided employment opportunities for two former welfare recipients—one serves as an administrative assistant and receptionist and the other has been promoted to economic development director and is presently completing advanced training provided by the National Development Council. Success stories such as this, unfortunately, are clearly not the norm in Crisp or Dooly County.

Profile of the TANF Caseload. Despite the limited availability of jobs paying a livable wage and the poor economic conditions described above, many of Crisp and Dooly's TANF recipients have been moving off of public assistance. Consistent with national and state trends, caseloads have declined in Crisp and Dooly counties (40.4% and 18.9%, respectively),though both counties have experienced less of a decline than the state as a whole (49.8%).

While these declines in caseloads are viewed as a positive change, local officials in both counties expressed concerns about how to help those people who remain on the TANF rolls make the transition from welfare to work. Most respondents classified this group of recipients as a "hard to serve population" comprised of multi-generational welfare dependants with low skill and motivation levels. Race, teen pregnancy, and single parenthood appear to exacerbate the struggles of such recipients. While the racial breakdowns of Crisp (60% White; 40% Black) and Dooly (51% White; 49%Black) are almost evenly split between Black and White, 89% of TANF clients in Crisp county and 84% of recipients in Dooly county are Black. Many local officials noted that racial segregation and discrimination continue to be a major problem in their counties and rural Georgia as a whole. TANF recipients in Crisp and Dooly are also disproportionately young, single mothers: 86% of Dooly's cases and 78% of Crisp's cases were single moms. Moreover, 58% of TANF clients in Dooly and 64% in Crisp, are female heads of household who began childbearing before the age of 20.

The Georgia Work Connection. To meet the special needs of these recipients, local officials have begun to implement a more holistic, self-sufficiency oriented approach within the DFCS agencies, as well as a broader, collaborative approach that includes regional stakeholders in Crisp, Dooly, and Macon counties. DFCS officials report that they are now using a case management approach to conduct comprehensive family needs assessments for their remaining TANF recipients. To some extent, they are shifting from an exclusively "work first" approach to a more intensive job readiness and family self-sufficiency model to meet the changing needs of their clients. Another key component of this more holistic case management strategy is that the county DFCS offices are reaching out beyond their agency to other service providers to give clients the specialized assistance they need.

Officials in Crisp and Dooly actually began using an informal collaborative approach to welfare and family well-being prior to the TANF legislation and the signing of the Georgia Work Connection memorandum of agreement. These counties were active participants in Georgia's initial experiments with welfare-to-work through the PEACH and Work First programs and also received state Family Connection grants which require local collaboration to improve family and child well-being. One local DFCS official noted that "we were already focusing on training opportunities and identifying barriers to self-sufficiency prior to the reforms." The creation of the Georgia Work Connection appears to have expanded and formalized Crisp and Dooly's existing collaborative approach to providing social services. Local staff from the three leading agencies, DFCS, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Adult and Technical Education, began meeting formally immediately after the signing of the MOA and created an official welfare reform steering committee.

The welfare reform steering committee has been meeting regularly (every other month) since the agreement took effect and various sub-committees now meet on a monthly basis. The membership of the steering committee is beginning to extend beyond the lead agencies to include regional and/or local representatives from the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, the Division of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse, Family Connection collaboratives, the Crisp-Dooly Empowerment Zone, and a youth education and training-oriented nonprofit organization called LEARNetwork. This outreach to non-agency partners was facilitated in large part by the well-established Family Connection collaboratives in Crisp and Dooly; relationships between stakeholders were formed and developed through the Family Connection programs and have been gradually carried over to the newer Work Connection collaborative.

A few years prior to the 1996 reforms, both counties were designated as state Family Connection sites and created separate non-profit organizations to administer the programs. Dooly County created the Community Enrichment Coalition (CEC) and Crisp County created the Crisp Community Council, Inc. (CCC). Their Board membership is extremely comprehensive and diverse and captures nearly every relevant group in the social services sector ranging from churches, to chambers of commerce, to non-profits, to technical schools, to the more traditional government agencies. Both collaboratives focus on the same three Family Connection benchmarks (reduce teen pregnancy, high school drop out rates, and child abuse and neglect).

Neither Family Connection collaborative focuses specifically on the self-sufficient families benchmark, but many of their projects indirectly contribute to these goals. The CEC, for example, is working with the EZ office and LEARNetwork to implement programs aimed at drop out prevention and adult literacy and is presently pursuing a "Choices and Changes" school to work program in partnership with the Georgia Council on Economics and Education. In Crisp county, the CCC has also partnered with the EZ, DFCS, and Crisp Regional Hospital to open the Gateway Center, a child advocacy and family resource center designed to prevent child abuse and allow for foster family visitation in a neutral, comfortable environment. Providing school to work training and reducing child abuse and neglect are services that may help some TANF families begin the transition to self-sufficiency or possibly prevent some county residents from entering “the system” in the first place.

Although the CEC and the CCC have some similar partners and Board members, the two organizations do not appear to collaborate across county lines very often. The Crisp-Dooly EZ, however, explicitly attempts to forge such cross-county programmatic links. In fact, when the area was promoted from an Enterprise Community ($3 million federal grant) to a Rural Empowerment Zone ($20 million federal grant), the local administration symbolically changed the name of the organization to the Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone to reflect a more regional orientation for this major policy initiative. The EZ has participated in and funded a variety of programs relevant to the region’s welfare reform efforts including a small business incubator project designed to encourage entrepreneurship activities and numerous low-income housing projects in partnership with a local non-profit called Community Housing Redevelopment Organization. The EZ’s executive director reports that one of the Zone’s highest priorities is to facilitate “education and training for life” and family literacy—they are presently working with Georgia Southwestern State University in Americus to try to bring a community college to the area. Clearly, these and other EZ efforts have the potential to contribute to the successful implementation of welfare reform in Crisp and Dooly counties.

The existing collaborative culture of local social service providers makes Crisp and Dooly uniquely well-suited to implement Georgia’s Work Connection collaborative at the local level. Due to the small size of these rural counties, most local stakeholders feel that they have to “wear many different hats” and that collaboration “just makes sense” in such an environment that requires people to work together to meet common goals. Most local officials agreed that while collaboration requires a multitude of meetings and is very time consuming, that ultimately, “it will make our jobs easier.” The welfare stakeholders in Crisp and Dooly counties appear extremely committed to making collaboration work in order to meet the needs of their TANF and working poor families.

The relatively low TANF caseloads in Crisp and Dooly counties also provide local officials with opportunities for experimentation and innovation that are not available to most metropolitan counties with significantly larger caseloads. While urban areas, including metropolitan Atlanta, continue to struggle with basic service provision and compliance with TANF work requirements, Crisp and Dooly are able to implement a more intensive and holistic case management strategy which, incidentally, appears much more appropriate for the recipients that remain on their welfare rolls.

Even with comparatively small caseloads though, Crisp and Dooly officials still struggle to assist their “hard to serve population” of welfare recipients. The low skill levels and compounding problems of child abuse, domestic violence, drug abuse, and mental and physical illnesses of many TANF clients, create the most intractable barriers to self-sufficiency. County DFCS officials admit that there are no quick fixes to these complex problems, but hope their collaborative case management approach will help eliminate some of these challenges. The low levels of education and training in the community were cited numerous times as particularly strong impediments to self-sufficiency and successful welfare reform implementation. Some service providers suggested closer partnerships with DTAE and the community technical schools to provide appropriate training for TANF recipients.

Insufficient child care and the lack of public transportation are two additional barriers to self-sufficiency that are particularly severe in rural counties such as Crisp and Dooly. Similar to most rural counties, Crisp and Dooly's child care system is predominantly home-based, relative care with fairly few slots in licensed day care centers. Consequently, most local officials expressed more concern about the quality, rather than merely the availability of child care for working parents. The counties also have been trying to develop a summer program for children to provide some additional child care options for the parents and children.

Reliable transportation is perhaps the most significant need for welfare recipients in rural counties such as Crisp and Dooly. There is no real public transportation in either county and very few TANF recipients own cars; merely getting to and from work then, poses quite a challenge in moving from welfare to work. The DFCS offices contract with local van services to take clients to and from various activities or training sessions or employment. Because the vans run around the DFCS activity schedule, TANF clients have virtually no flexibility in their transportation options and must find their own way to doctor's appointments, the grocery store, or to pick up children from child care. Some officials expressed concerns that relying on government-sponsored transportation after obtaining employment does not encourage self-sufficiency; a DFCS staff member remarked that the former TANF recipients "are still so tied to us" and have "no real freedom" because they still have to rely on government services for transportation and other supports.

While a 5311 Rural Transportation program is in the planning stages in Dooly County, there has been no corresponding transportation initiative in Crisp. The State's new Unified Transportation program offers another potential solution, but has yet to take effect in the region and one respondent noted that the UTP has not "trickled down to Crisp-Dooly yet."

By far the greatest challenge facing Crisp and Dooly in their implementation of welfare reform is the need to streamline and consolidate their impressive variety of collaborative efforts. The four main collaboratives in Crisp and Dooly all focus on different geographic levels despite their nearly identical missions to improve family well-being and self-sufficiency in the area--the two Family Connection collaboratives are county specific, the Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone works within Crisp and Dooly exclusively, and the Georgia Work Connection extends to include Crisp, Dooly, and Macon counties. Many officials reported that there is a great deal of overlap in the membership of these various collaborations and that "you see the same faces at many of these meetings." Given the extremely busy schedules of most social service providers, consolidating meetings and programs can significantly improve both the efficiency and the ultimate effectiveness of local service provision.

In summary, while Crisp and Dooly's embarrassment of collaborative riches provides a sharp contrast to Atlanta, it remains to be seen whether these assets will be enough to overcome the serious economic, geographic, and resource barriers that stand in the way of moving these two counties moving their neediest residents into the work force, and eventually, to self-sufficiency.

Does Collaboration Make a Difference?

As noted earlier in our paper, many have made a strong case for collaboration as a more effective approach to desired policy outcomes than the conventional, highly fragmented manner in which welfare reform/workforce development programs are typically delivered. In this section we examine whether collaboration makes a difference by assessing what impact, if any, collaboration has on selected welfare reform policy outcomes in Georgia.

To assess the extent of collaboration regarding welfare reform and workforce development issues in Georgia counties we conducted interviews during the summer of 1999 with the regional coordinators for each of the state agencies participating in the Georgia Work Connection. These officials included the 12 regional coordinators for the Division of Family and Children Services, the 12 regional consultants for the Department of Human Resources' Unified Transportation Plan, the executive directors of the 16 Private Industry Councils, the managers of the Georgia Department of Labor 53 field service offices, and the Fatherhood Initiative specialists and New Connections to Work coordinators in each of the state's 36 technical institutes. In addition, we also interviewed the regional consultants for the Family Connection. In addition to asking several questions about the context for collaboration and the progress to date of the Georgia Work Connection in their region, each respondent was asked to assess the level of collaboration in each county in their region and to provide some descriptive information about the nature of collaboration in their counties (e.g., relationship with other collaboratives, structure of collaboration, focus of collaboration, etc.).

We used a five stage model of collaboration as outlined in the *Together We Can* report (see discussion in opening section of the paper) and provided each respondent with a brief description of that model. Respondents were asked to rate each county based on where along that scale they considered each county in their region to be: 1) getting together, 2) building trust and ownership, 3) developing a strategic plan, 4) taking action, and 5) going to scale. A composite score for each county was then calculated by averaging the scores across respondents. Counties with a score less than 2 were coded as low collaboration, counties with a score between 2 and 3.5 were coded as medium collaboration, and counties with a score greater than 3.5 were coded as high collaboration. Table 6 reports the overall distribution of assessments by type of respondent.

To assess the impact of collaboration on welfare reform policy outcomes, we examined the relationship between our measure of collaboration and selected characteristics of county TANF caseloads. These included the percentage change in the TANF caseload between January 1, 1997 and July 30, 1998, the proportion of TANF clients who left welfare for employment in 1998, the proportion of TANF exits due to employment who were still employed 30 days following their exit, the work participation rate for a county's TANF caseload, the amount spent on supportive services per client (transportation, incidentals, etc.) by the Employment Services unit of county DFCS offices, the mean number of months clients have received assistance, and the proportion of adult recipients classified as long-term recipients. Table 7 summarizes the results of an analysis of variance conducted using these indicators as dependent variables and our composite measure of collaboration as the independent variable. We also report means by level of collaboration for selected demographic and economic characteristics of Georgia counties, including population and population change, unemployment rate, poverty, and median household income.

Overall, 53 counties (35.6%) were classified as counties with high levels of collaboration, 53 counties (35.6%) were reported to have medium levels of collaboration, and 43 counties (28.9%) were coded as having a low level of collaboration (Table 7). A large proportion of counties with low collaboration are rural. More than half of all rural counties were considered to have low collaboration and nearly half of all counties with low collaboration were rural. Counties with high collaboration tended to be nonmetropolitan counties with some urban population. More

Table 6. Sample Characteristics: Distribution of State Officials Interviewed Regarding Local Collaboration on Welfare Reform/ Workforce Development, Summer 1999.

	Department of Human Resources		*Department of Labor*		*Department of Technical and Adult Education*		*Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families*
	DFCS Field Coordinators	*UTP Field Coordinators*	*PIC/SDA Directors*	*Field Service Office Managers*	*Fatherhood Initiative Specialists*	*New Connectons to Work Coordinators*	*The Family Connection Consultants*
Number of officials	12	12	16	53	36	36	11
Number interviewed	9	12	13	18	4	5	5
Percent interviewed	75	100	81	34	11	14	45
Counties for which collaboration assessment completed							
Number	86	3	93	68	12	26	31
Percent	54	2	58	43	8	16	19
Level of collaboration (%)*							
1. Getting together	17	0	9	3	8	19	29
2. Building trust and ownership	26	0	29	16	0	12	7
3. Developing strategic plan	16	0	39	22	8	8	19
4. Taking action	27	100	15	32	25	27	36
5. Going to scale	14	0	9	27	58	35	10
Mean	2.94	4.00	2.86	3.63	4.25	3.46	2.90

* Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 7. Characteristics of Counties by Level of Collaboration.

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Number of counties	43	53	53	149
Percent of counties	28.9	35.6	35.6	100
Type of County#				
Metropolitan	9	16	12	37
Percent (metropolitan counties)	24.3%	43.2%	32.4%	100.0%
Percent (within level of collaboration)	20.9%	30.2%	22.6%	24.8%
Nonmetropolitan, with some urban population	13	26	32	71
Percent (nonmetropolitan counties)	18.3%	36.6%	45.1%	100.0%
Percent (within level of collaboration)	30.2%	49.1%	60.4%	47.7%
Rural	21	11	9	41
Percent (rural counties)	51.2%	26.8%	22.0%	100.0%
Percent (within level of collaboration)	48.8%	20.8%	17.0%	27.5%
County Demographic and Economic Characteristics				
1998 Population	54207	44516	49920	49235
Percent population change, 1990-98	11.5	14.5	18.2	15.0
Unemployment rate, 1997*	7.2	6.3	5.0	6.1
Percent of persons below poverty, 1995*	21.5	19.8	17.3	19.4
Median household income, 1995	27586	29147	30839	29298
TANF Profile				
Percent change in TANF caseload, 1997-1998*	-32.3	-39.5	-41.4	-38.1
Percent TANF exits who were employed, 1998	56.6	59.2	57.3	57.8
Percent TANF exits with job retention, 1998	68.7	68.7	65.5	67.6
Work participation rate, November 1997	43.0	44.1	42.9	43.4
Support service expenditures per TANF client, 1998	452	538	437	477
Percent on assistance more than 36 months, July 1998	55.2	51.9	50.0	52.2
Average number of months on assistance, July 1998*	52.3	48.0	45.9	48.4
Percent on TANF more than 24 months, February 1999*	32.2	27.0	22.9	27.1
Average number of months on TANF, February 1999*	15.8	14.7	13.0	14.4

Type of county based on U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Services classification. Metropolitan counties include counties located in a Metropolitan Statistical Area or equivalent; Nonmetropolitan counties include counties located outside MSAs with some urban population; Rural counties include nonmetropolitan counties with no urban population.

Chi Square 26.244, $p < .01$
$r_s = -.17$, $p < .05$

* Significance of F < .05

than half (60%) of the counties coded as high on the collaboration scale were of this type, which was about 12 percentage points higher than this group's share of the total sample.

In terms of demographic and economic conditions, with the exception of population size, all of the characteristics reported in Table 7 have a direct linear relationship with level of collaboration. As collaboration increases so does the relative vitality of the county as measured by population change, unemployment rate, median household income, and percent of persons with income below the poverty level. The bottom panel of Table 7 shows a similar pattern for some—but not all—of the outcome indicators. Change in TANF caseloads and length of time recipients spent on public assistance follow this pattern whereas several other indicators—such as percentage of TANF exits that were employed, job retention, work participation rates, and expenditures on support services—show a weaker relationship with levels of collaboration.

To try and sort out the effects of collaboration from local economic conditions, Table 8 reports the mean percentage change in TANF caseloads (1997-98) by level of collaboration grouping the counties by their unemployment rates. Though not a direct linear relationship, the data show that for every category of unemployment counties with medium or high levels of collaboration have experienced greater reductions in TANF caseloads than counties with a low level of collaboration. Table 9, which reports the results of an OLS regression, shows that while the direction of the relationship is in the predicted direction (an increase in the level of collaboration is associated with a greater reduction in TANF caseloads, controlling for unemployment and the average months TANF recipients had been on assistance), the coefficient fails to attain statistical significance, due largely to the pattern pointed out in Table 8. While our measurement scale may not be sharp enough to pick up differences between counties with medium and high levels of collaboration, our results do suggest that counties with low levels of collaboration have had less success in reducing their TANF caseloads than other counties, regardless of their local economic conditions.

Table 8. Mean Change in TANF Caseloads, 1997-1998, by Unemployment Rate and Level of Collaboration.

Unemployment Rate	*Level of collaboration*	*Mean*	*N*	*Std. Deviation*
Low (<4.6)	Low	-38.5	7	11.5
	Medium	-41.5	14	4.4
	High	-43.5	22	11.5
	Total	-42.0	43	9.7
Medium (4.6-6.5)	Low	-38.0	14	17.2
	Medium	-43.2	16	13.0
	High	-41.5	26	12.9
	Total	-41.1	56	14.0
High (>6.5)	Low	-26.5	22	12.6
	Medium	-35.5	23	14.7
	High	-31.1	5	19.0
	Total	-31.1	50	14.6
Total	Low	-32.2	43	15.0
	Medium	-39.4	53	12.6
	High	-41.3	53	13.2
	Total	-38.0	149	13.9

Table 9. Determinants of Percentage Change in TANF Caseloads in Georgia Counties, 1997-1998.

Model	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*		
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*t*	*Sig.*
Constant	-59.517	6.986		-8.520	.000
Level of collaboration	-1.928	1.399	-.111	-1.377	.171
Unemployment rate, 1997	1.496	.464	.267	3.228	.002
Average months on assistance, July 1998	.339	.113	.238	3.013	.003

N = 149
Adjusted R Square .204
Standard error of the estimate 12.4160
F 13.356 Sig. .000

Conclusion: Capitalizing on the Opportunities of Devolution to Improve Outcomes for Needy Families and Neighborhoods

In a 1988 publication, *Within Our Reach*, Lisbeth Schorr, documented the "high cost of rotten outcomes" (e.g., adolescent crime, school dropouts, school-age child bearing, detachment from the labor force, welfare dependency) and provided dozens of examples of programs that succeeded in reducing the risk factors that lead to rotten outcomes. Schorr concluded that successful programs were distinctly different from the conventional methods used to deliver most social programs: "many interventions have turned out to be ineffective not because seriously disadvantaged families are beyond help, but because we have tried to attack complex, deeply rooted tangles of troubles with isolated fragments of help, with help rendered grudgingly in one-shot forays, with help designed less to meet the needs of beneficiaries than to conform to professional or bureaucratic convenience, with help that may be useful to middle-class families but is often irrelevant to families struggling to survive."[57]

In a subsequent book, *Common Purpose*, Schorr builds on these lessons and examines why many of the innovative programs she identified five years earlier were no longer operating or had not expanded beyond their demonstration phase. She opens this book with a discussion of the "Seven Attributes of Highly Successful Programs," which were derived from an assessment of successful instances in which policy entrepreneurs were able to overcome significant barriers to sustain or expand policy innovations. According to Schorr, successful programs are: 1) comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering; 2) see children in the context of their

[57] Lisbeth B. Schorr, Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 263-264.

families; 3) deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities; 4) have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time; 5) are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills; 6) have staffs that are trained and supported to provide high quality, responsive services; and 7) operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.[58]

At a February 1998 conference convened by the Policy Exchange of the Institute for Educational Leadership, Schorr outlined seven common strategies utilized by officials at all levels of governments and sectors (public, private, nonprofit) that have enabled a wide variety of initiatives (schools, family support, welfare-to-work, child protection, early childhood development) to overcome “the red tape, rigid bureaucracies and financing formulas that undermine the very attributes of success.”[59] In our conclusion, we look at these strategies in light of Georgia’s experience to date in fostering a more collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development.

1. Combine replication with flexibility. Many of the agency regional directors, coordinators, and consultants with whom we spoke noted that the State has been fairly flexible with local communities regarding the design and implementation of a collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development. One respondent noted that State directives “have provided a framework and then let local offices work it out.” Another added that the State has been almost deliberately vague in its communications with communities to avoid appearing to be too heavy handed in dictating the structure that local collaboration should take. One respondent pointed out that “leadership at the state and regional level has also played a role in increasing collaboration at the local level as they refused to take a cookie cutter approach to welfare reform. Instead, they allowed different regions to figure out what was needed, thereby empowering regional leadership and making them feel good about working with other agencies.” The same official added that “state leaders have created a positive incentive structure to encourage coordination as agencies are more likely to get additional funding if they apply as a collaborative rather than as individual agencies.”

While many respondents applauded the flexibility of the state’s mandate for collaboration, several raised concerns that the lack of greater guidance and resources to support local collaboration means that in many communities such efforts are stalled because communities lack the capacity to move forward on their own. One official noted that he “wishes the state would provide more technical assistance with fewer strings attached.” He added that he was frustrated “because it sometimes seems that rural areas must wait to see how programs fare in Atlanta or elsewhere before they are given the go-ahead to implement them within their own region. If the state has something to let local and regional agencies use, then let us use it; if not, let local groups follow their own schedule.” Another pointed out that “the state needs to do a better job of telling local officials what they can and cannot do. So many times people feel that they have

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[58] Lisbeth B. Schorr, Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America (New York: Anchor Books, 1997).

[59] Lisbeth Schorr, Kathleen Sylvester, and Margaret Dunkle, Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose: Tools for Turning Good Ideas Into Good Policies (Washington, D.C.: The Policy Exchange, Institute for Educational Leadership, 1999). Available at http://www.policyexchange.iel.org/pubs.html.

to get authority from on high before they can try something new. This hesitancy sometimes keeps local collaboratives from helping clients."[60]

A DFCS field coordinator in one region noted that his region had convened two sessions among the district managers of each of the partner agencies along with some front line staff to discuss the real issues impeding progress on collaboration. Out of those two meetings came guidelines for local collaboration and each county was asked to complete their plan by the end of calendar year 1999. This respondent added that Georgia Work Connection officials had promised local guidelines for collaboration in 1997 but they never sent them out. He noted that "the expectation of collaboration is understood at the county level but there hasn't been much specific guidance beyond that."

Another respondent reported that "the biggest barrier to collaboration is a lack of employee training in facilitation and the resolution of disputes. The state provides few guidelines or techniques for easing cooperation among participants. When collaboration is defined by regional agency leaders, it too often comes to mean simply more meetings among the leaders rather than cooperation among line workers on a daily basis." She went on to add that "the state needs to establish regional missions and visions and to assist local groups in reaching those goals. Not all local partners have the same vision, so it would be helpful if the state could fund an organizational structure that would determine how to fit solutions for local problems into larger collaborative goals."

Some agency regional officials believe this flexibility is allowed because state officials are not as aware of existing local collaborative efforts—some dating as far back as the Work Incentive program of the early 1970s or the PEACH program that was created in response to the JOBS program in the late 1980s.

2. Create a new balance between regulation and accountability. A substantial majority of respondents noted that the shift toward a more collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development in Georgia has been accompanied by increased emphasis on outcomes and performance monitoring. This holds not only for intra-organizational relationships between headquarters, field, and local offices within departments, but also for inter-organizational relationships such as contracts for services between agencies (e.g., DHR contracts with the departments of Labor and Technical and Adult Education) and contracts between agencies and nonprofit service providers. A clear majority of regional officials reported that contracts with non-profit organizations (especially Goodwill Industries, which was specifically mentioned by several respondents) have become significantly more detailed with greater emphasis on employment and related performance and outcome measures. One official noted that the State now evaluates her region on how well it monitors the success or failure of its non-profit contracts.

One official noted the Work Connection collaborative has yielded an accountability system that tracks which agency provides which services to clients, so that when there is a lapse, one can quickly determine where it occurred and what actions were taken to notify DFCS so that a client

[60] This pattern extends as well to the state-federal relationship. We attended a regional workshop earlier this summer on the new TANF regulations and were struck by how many times state officials asked the federal representatives whether they were permitted to provide certain types of services only to learn they already had the authority to do so.

could be sanctioned, if necessary. Another official in a different part of the state with the same agency took the opposite perspective and felt the lack of accountability was a real barrier to further development of collaboration. According to this official, "there is no accountability on the issue of collaboration. People seem to perform better if they know that they are going to be graded and as it stands now, no one is rewarded by how successful they are in helping a partner place someone in a job so officials revert to old patterns of working individually to make sure they receive credit for their work." Another respondent picked up on this theme and noted that frequently there is intense competition among Work Connection agencies for the same clients. This official pointed out that DFCS places emphasis on putting clients to work so they count toward the state's work participation requirement whereas Labor's interest in their Welfare-to-Work program is primarily in placing clients in training.

One field coordinator pointed out that the increased specificity in contracts can also backfire. She pointed out that in her region collaboration worked well until the Department of Labor reached its goals very early in the process (within the first six months); after that the DOL adopted a "pick and choose" mentality about its involvement, which has stymied progress as the DOL often refuses to participate in new initiatives."

3. Make use of outside intermediaries. Schorr observed that "successful scale-up rarely occurs without the support of outside intermediaries. Almost uniformly, the successful initiatives that I have studied received crucial help in developing and sustaining reform from some form of intermediary organization that offered expertise, legitimization, clout, and outside support for national, state and local networking and peer-to-peer dialogue."[61] We uncovered little evidence of this networking and connections to outside intermediaries in our interviews with agency regional officials. One respondent, for example, pointed out that her region brought in a national expert on workforce training and the new legislation/regulations pertaining to (Welfare-to-Work grants and the Workforce Investment Act) because they had been waiting for the state to send in an expert but that never happened. She added that several other regions also independently hired outside consultants to brief partners on the new legislation.

Further, we found many instances where pieces of the collaboration puzzle were not as well connected as we had been lead to believe by brochures, program descriptions, grant applications, and presentations at public symposia and workshops. For example, many of the regional officials involved with the Department of Human Resources' Unified Transportation Plan appear to be loosely connected—if at all—with the Georgia Work Connection, and many of these officials see their role as separate from the state's efforts at promoting welfare reform. Some UTP officials, for example, have never attended a Work Connection meeting in their region. One UTP regional director asked the interviewer "why have you chosen us to interview for questions on the Georgia Work Connection?" The respondent went on to say that "We're [the UTP] seen as a resource and not as a collaborator. We're a taxi service. They don't tell us about it and it doesn't seem relevant to me. We just provide transportation." Another UTP official remarked that their role is simply to help the various DHR agencies get their clients to work and does not see UTP as part of the collaborative process. One UTP official remarked that "unified transportation is like an oxymoron. We're trying to drive the unified concept. When they see it working, it will convince them." UTP and the Work Connection do, however, appear to be

[61] Schorr, "Strategies that Make a Difference," p. 11.

collaborating in some regions of the state. In one area, UTP officials took the lead and invited all the relevant agencies to meet with them and express their transportation needs.

4. Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations. In addition to a relatively loose connection among partner agencies at the local level, we also found several examples of a relatively poor fit between the Georgia Work Connection and community-based organizations, whether on an individual basis or through a consortium or collaboration. A few respondents went so far as to volunteer that efforts to date have largely excluded nonprofit organizations as participating partners in the Work Connection collaborative out of fear that casting a wider net to include more partners would only slow the process down and jeopardize the state's ability to meet the work participation goals outlined in the 1996 welfare reform legislation.

Yet, in many areas of the state there are existing collaboratives that either predate the Georgia Work Connection or were developed simultaneously to the Work Connection. One respondent noted that the Work Connection is not the first time there has been collaboration within his region. He explained that DFCS and the technical schools have worked together since the 1970s and that these preexisting relationships made the adjustments to current collaborative efforts quite smooth. Other respondents pointed out that while there were preexisting relationships in many counties, the state's mandate to collaborate through the Georgia Work Connection strengthened those relationships and gave them greater meaning.

The Family Connection is perhaps the best example of a preexisting collaboration though there are others. In most of the Family Connection counties, for example, the new Work Connection collaborative replicates the existing collaborative and many regional officials have recommended consolidation of the two efforts into a single collaborative. In other counties, the two efforts overlap in membership, but maintain their independence.

We did find, however, several examples where the local Work Connection collaborative extended beyond the three core state partners. Many officials we spoke with pointed out that the Work Connection in their region included several participants outside state agencies including hospitals, housing authorities, school systems, chambers of commerce, and in some instances, nonprofit service providers. These partners have performed a number of roles, including work experience, GED and specialized technical training, client assessments, and the identification of employment needs in the private sector. Some respondents reported that outreach beyond the initial three partners was largely a function of the collaboration's evolution. One noted "at first the main goal was simply to place people in jobs. Therefore partnerships with non-state agencies were relatively limited. As goals expanded, so did relationships with other groups and agencies."

One county holds a monthly "Employer's Committee" that includes all Work Connection partners, the local Chamber of Commerce, Goodwill Industries, a local economic development organization, the Office of Industry, Travel, and Trade, and some local employers. The committee often invites guest speakers to their meeting to discuss relevant employment or social service issues; guest speakers have included representatives from the Georgia Fatherhood Initiative and private employers. This committee also formed a Job Club in partnership with the Cooperative Extension service that holds a four-week seminar on job readiness and life skills that is open to all TANF and Food Stamp recipients. Representatives from the Department of Labor transport clients to and from this seminar. Several respondents emphasized that one of the primary benefits of the Work Connection has been better relationships with the private sector. Many noted that private employers were now more likely to step forward and participate in their activities. Others indicated that collaboration among the state agencies has reduced the tendency for multiple agencies of the state to chase after the same employers seeking to place their clients in jobs, though not all respondents agreed that multiple contacts with the same employer had declined.

As another illustration of how the Georgia Work Connection has fostered a better relationship with local service providers, one regional official described how a collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development had led to greater coordination of activities between two county DFCS offices, a DOL field service office, and the Private Industry Council. Though these relationships were brought about in part by supplemental federal funding, they have recently expanded to include a number of additional local partners such as the area technical institute, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Child Support Enforcement, community mental health agencies in both counties, the regional development agency, two housing authorities, and two large nonprofit service providers. As the respondent concluded, "this level of collaboration was something new. Before TANF, there were no formal collaborative arrangements."

In addition to creating new partnerships, collaboration on welfare reform has also strengthened and extended existing links between agencies and nonprofit organizations in some regions. In one county, for example, the YMCA was a partner in child care provision before welfare reform and now, in response to new demands, has increased its child care services to include non-traditional working hours. This county's YMCA has also extended its services to a larger area that includes some adjoining rural counties as a result of its greater involvement with welfare reform (and especially due to its receipt of agency contracts for services).

In a few cases, we found evidence that the emphasis on the Work Connection collaboration had detrimental effects on nonprofit agencies. One respondent pointed out that directives from the central agencies that the Work Connection partner agencies work together caused existing relations with nonprofit agencies to be severed. For example, one county DFCS office that used to contract with a local community action agency for educational services is now using the local technical institute (Department of Technical and Adult Education) to provide those same services. Another respondent pointed out that state memorandum on the Work Connection often display a limited vision. For example, one memorandum instructed county DFCS offices to refer clients seeking to complete their GED to the technical institute in their area. The respondent noted, however, that the Private Industry Councils also offer programs for completion of the GED but the memorandum failed to mention them as a referral.

A regional field coordinator for DFCS related a similar story. She noted that "local agencies do not have the same amount of money to contract with outside providers as before TANF. Much of this money has been absorbed back into the state agencies. For example, DTAE provides training that might have previously been contracted out to a nonprofit organizations."

5. Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations. Several respondents offered comments consistent with this strategy. Frequently they centered on the tensions between putting people to work and investing in education, training, and skill development that would better prepare welfare recipients to compete for higher paying jobs. As one respondent succinctly summarized this dilemma, "state officials have done a good job of getting their objectives across. Local and regional officials understand the importance of finding clients employment. Work first, work first, work first. But we don't have any idea what comes second." She added "some clients need a different form of assistance (e.g., SSI, health care) but we are supposed to help them get off government assistance rather than link them to other resources."

As one respondent argued, however, taking a longer view of change requires changing the views or perceptions of employers. A respondent involved with securing contracts with employers for metro area TANF recipients noted that "although some employers have taken responsibility for this new wave of employment opportunities, others have run like scalded dogs. Most of the TANF clients we are now dealing with have little or no education, mental or drug problems, and no employment record. Employer risk is high for many that have the responsibility to hire new recruits. Others realize that turnover will be high and expect to find a few "good employees" in the bunch."

Other comments focused on concerns respondents shared about the state's long-term commitment to the collaborative approach. Some questioned whether the state was still committed and noted that the state's new leadership had yet to weigh in on the future of the Georgia Work Connection in any meaningful way. Thus, for collaboration to succeed in tackling tough problems that require time for results to emerge there must be concrete and tangible evidence from state leaders to stay the course. As a regional coordinator noted, "the first thing that needs to be done is the commissioners at the state level need to get together and decide whether they're partners or not (especially DTAE but also DHR). The commitment has wavered in the last two years. The commissioners should rededicate themselves and verbalize their commitments as well as clarify the roles of the different departments."

6. Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods. Based on the responses we received, the strategy of geographic targeting appears to be one of the greatest opportunities and biggest challenges facing the implementation of welfare reform and workforce development initiatives, due largely to the fact that states and their administrative entities (counties, workforce development agencies) are more accustomed to serving clients than residents of specific neighborhoods. City agencies, which typically tend to have a greater sensitivity to local geography and can often bring additional support services to the collaboration, are often not formal partners in local collaborative efforts

One practice that appears to be fairly widely used is the creation of various one-stop service centers. For example, some county DFCS offices have arranged to have front line staff from other Work Connection partner agencies as well as related service providers to be on-site (some as frequently as a daily basis) to meet with TANF clients. In one county, the one-stop is open every Friday night and according to one official we spoke with "last Friday the DFCS office was completely full of people wanting to take advantage of the one-stop." Though not neighborhood-oriented per se (where they exist these one-stop centers tend to be a single location within a county), they have had the desired effect of cutting down the number of trips clients need to make to acquire needed information and services. As one state official pointed out, this approach is probably more accurately described as a "no wrong door approach" as opposed to a "one-stop" in that one of the central objectives of the Work Connection is to provide clients with information about all of the programs and services available, regardless of which agency they have come to for assistance.

Though at a larger scale of geography than neighborhood, a related issue that received repeated mention was regionalism. One respondent pointed out that “someone at the state level needs enough gumption to establish a single set of service delivery boundaries and enforce it.” One Private Industry Council official, for example, reported that she must deal with four different technical institutes and “so many meetings must be allotted to deal with one little county that is outside of her district.” Another respondent pointed out that “it’s difficult to plan on a regional level because there are so many agencies and each has a different way of operating. Further, many counties in the same administrative region often face very different situations with respect to client populations and work opportunities.” She added that when there are regional meetings in her area, most people do not attend. Another respondent added that “there are 17 counties in my region so getting all of the divisions of the three central agencies to work together is already assembling a cast of thousands. For this reason, there is little participation by outside partners.”

Yet despite difficulties with the varied administrative geographies of the Work Connection partner agencies, most respondents—especially those in rural parts of the state—acknowledged the important of taking a regional perspective on these issues. As one respondent reported, “in some of the rural counties there is no choice but to take the regionalism path. People have to think regionally. There are no jobs within the county, so agencies have to look outside their counties and even outside the state if they are to provide employment opportunities for TANF clients.” Another pointed out that the collaboration has broadened the world view of some participants (i.e., DFCS) as it has brought them together with other agencies that have more of a regional perspective. She added that “because county DFCS offices now work with DTAE’s technical institutes that have a multiple county jurisdiction they are forced to take a broader perspective on many issues.” Another respondent shared a similar perspective: “by working with institutions that serve a regional constituency (especially the technical schools), DFCS staff are forced out of their local mindset.” He added that “regional thinking may become more prominent in the future as people begin to think in terms of labor markets. Employers don’t care where the workers come from as long as they get there on time and are suitably qualified.”

One respondent gave evidence from a county in his region that a shift to a more regional approach had already produced important benefits. In that county the relationships established in the Work Connection appear to have allowed for a targeted, collaborative effort in response to several recent plant closings. After a regional meeting, the DOL representative called together the members of a local, county-specific, collaboration of service providers to plan a coordinated response to the plant closings. DOL offered to meet with the plant management and the group decided to set up information sessions for the dislocated workers and planned a job fair.

7. Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising. As responsibility and discretion in crafting responses to problems gets pushed down to lower levels, and in some instances, out of government to nonprofit or quasi-governmental entities, the capacity of local officials and institutions to capitalize on this discretion becomes essential. In short, proponents of devolution often assume that those officials closest to clients have the answers. Yet, as we heard from many respondents, local officials frequently are the last ones to know about the most recent innovations, best practices, and promising stragegies. This perspective was brought into sharp focus by the comments of two respondents in two very different parts of the state. One official in Southwest Georgia pointed out that their “problem has not been in getting people to the table but in figuring out what to do next once we got everyone in the room. This was especially troublesome for private sector representatives, who in the past had not been part of these discussions, and who were accustomed to having all the answers (or the ability to easily acquire them)." Another respondent from one of the suburban counties in north of Atlanta noted that her agency did not have access to internet email or the world wide web. Thus, while there may be a wealth of information readily available via the internet from web sites such as The Welfare Information Network, as far as this respondent was concerned that information simply did not exist.

Further, to build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works requires that collaboration members meet and discuss current and future goals. According to one respondent in the metro-Atlanta area, getting partners to meet to discuss and share information is extremely difficult. This respondent argued that "...[a formal collaborative partner] is more lip service than it is anything else. There are a lot of meetings but no action." She added that she and others in her agency "have to scream loud and hard in order to make themselves heard." In fact the relationship between her agency and other partners has grown so acrimonious that "they try not to attend meetings because they don't feel like they accomplish anything by going." When asked additional questions about the collaborative and the level of involvement of other players she replied that "a key agency in the partnership never comes to their meetings so how do they know what's going on."

Conclusion

According to Eugene Bardach, who studied nineteen examples of interagency collaboration across a wide array of policy domains, "one reason that more value-creating collaborations do not occur is that the task of collaboration is very difficult. Working cooperatively is often much more complicated than it sounds. It involves reconciling worldviews and professional ideologies that cluster within agency boundaries but differ across them. Moreover, it is often difficult to align agencies' work efforts in the face of governmental administrative systems that presuppose deliberate nonalignment. Indeed, they favor specialization and separateness down to the smallest line item."[62]

In his conclusion Bardach places emphasis on the role that leadership plays in moving collaborative efforts forward. "Finding and motivating talented individuals to do the leadership job is a big and important challenge. The challenge is often not met successfully, and it is more often not even noticed. One might say that in many of the cases when ICCs do not arise, it is not just because agencies do not wish to give up resources and protect turf but that leaders have not arisen to help organize the potential partners. Such a failure may be variously attributed to inadequate incentives, resources, or legitimacy."[63]

These themes came up again and again in our conversations with state and local officials working at the front lines of welfare reform and workforce development in Georgia. A common concern among many of the Georgia collaborative partners is the lack of state oversight and direction. Many questioned the commitment of top-level state leaders to the Work Connection and pointed out that this commitment appears to have wavered significantly in the past twoyears. Others attributed difficulties in getting the Work Connection collaboratives off the ground in the

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[62] Eugene Bardach, Getting Agencies to Work Together, pp. 306-307.

[63] Ibid., pp. 308-309.

field to poor communication. Many respondents also noted that the attitude and willingness of leaders to pursue a collaborative vision is the biggest factor determining success. While several pointed out that many agency leaders do not appear to be committed to collaboration or are working under major constraints (larger caseloads, extremely rural settings, etc.), turf guarding has not emerged as a major barrier to improved integration and collaboration among agency partners. The meetings are cordial and there is little back-biting among the participants.

One agency field coordinator noted that while "state agencies have created an expectation of collaboration among regional and local agencies, most people don't know what collaboration is. They think if we meet together and we agree, we have collaborated. However, in order to truly collaborate, one needs to put all the resources on the table and allocate them in a way that is best for the client. Most agencies are scared by the prospect of giving their resources to other groups, even if those groups are more efficient or better equipped to carry out a task." He concluded by noting that "the state needs to provide training in facilitation and to create a common understanding of what it means to collaborate."

Another pointed out that "the state should do a better job informing the local agencies about decisions made at the state level. There are all these meetings in Atlanta and the results never get down to line workers. The further down you go, the slower the information filters." Another echoed this sentiment: "while the state has been successful in getting its general objectives across to officials at the county director level, the collaborative message has not filtered through to where people really do the work. She added that "line workers and especially DFCS workers are too concerned about what goes on at their desk to implement effective partnerships with other agencies."

One respondent, for example, noted that her agency had set up regional briefings but then put them on hold while her agency "developed its vision." That didn't bother the respondent but she noted that the department should have done that two years ago because now people are wondering whether all this collaboration and work was for nothing. In some cases, people have met for two to three days every other month on collaboration in order to develop a common intake system, vendor arrangements, and management information system. They need a pep talk because they don't feel they're being rewarded for their collaboration."

Several respondents reported the need for a comprehensive communication process from the governor all the way down to the office receptionist in a local service office. According to one respondent, "this process is currently nonexistent. In fact, agencies often have trouble getting information down just one level within their own agencies. The corporate culture before was that information was shared on a need to know basis and the big picture was not important to convey. With collaboration, that approach no longer works." Another respondent was even more blunt in her assessment: "the state needs to get the message to all staff—and I mean everyone, from the secretaries who answer the phones to the people who do the work—that collaboration is now an expected part of their job. Staff must be willing to put all the resources at the disposal of the client and not hold back out of fear or to guard turf. If they can't do that, then they should look for another job."

One respondent noted that "he would like to see directives come down through all three agencies instead of just through the Department of Labor. The way it has been going, DOL has all the information and therefore is seen as the enforcer when they try to get the other agencies to collaborate. There should be specific pointed orders from people with clout in each agency.

These orders would give collaboration a boost." He added, "at the state level, one representative from each agency meets periodically and sets up committees on different things but then the committee reports and findings are not conveyed back to the agencies in the field."

In closing, our preliminary assessment of Georgia's experience to date provides empirical support indicating that collaboration does make a difference. Selected welfare reform and workforce development outcomes were better in counties with greater levels of collaboration than was the case in those counties where field staff indicated welfare reform/workforce development collaboration was low. In addition, our analysis provided several examples of how Georgia's experience with welfare reform validates what we have learned from other observers about the attributes of successful collaborative initiatives.

Yet at the same time, our analysis suggests that if Georgia is truly to succeed in moving its neediest citizens from dependency to economic self-sufficiency, greater clarity, commitment, and resources most be mobilized, beginning from the very highest levels of state leadership. Devolution has provided the state with unprecedented flexibility in crafting such a response. It remains to be seen whether the current group of leaders is able to translate that flexibility into the actions needed to assist the state's neediest families, raise the skill level of the state's labor force, and in turn, enhance the economic base needed to sustain the quality of life for all of the state's citizens. These answers may come soon as we learn more about the state's strategy for implementing the Workforce Development Act.