**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIOA Partner Briefing: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

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*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

CHARLOTTE HARRIS: Today we have from our TANF partners, the Administration for Children and Families we have Rachel Gwilliam, the program specialist. She's going to be the primary presenter, along with Julie Siegel who is the director of the Division of State TANF Policies, and they're going to be briefing us today on the TANF programs and how they support the workforce system. Now, I'm going to turn it over to Rachel.

RACHEL GWILLIAM: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Rachel Gwilliam, a program specialist in the Division of State TANF Policy here in the Office of Family Assistance. I'd also like to recognize Mr. Damon Waters and Lisa Washington-Thomas who are in the room. They're part of our TA division here in OFA. We also have (Antoinette Kitchen ?) and Karen Clairmont from the state TANF policy team, and they know they're free to add to or clarify at any time during my presentation.

So a little bit of an overview. The TANF program is intended to foster economic security and stability for low income families with children. It's a $16.5 billion block grant program for states, also the territories and the District of Columbia. It replaced AFDC or what was the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, in 1996, and it added new work requirements and time limits. Its block grant structure and broad purposes have made it into a flexible funding stream that's used by states for a wide variety of activities.

In addition to monthly cash assistance payments, low income families with children can receive a wide range of services that must be reasonably calculated to meet the program's four purposes, which are to provide assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives and dependents of needy parents through job preparation, work, and marriage, prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

There are a couple of rules here that we're going to look at. The federal rule, what we do here, we have a policy role. We provide broad policy guidance on statutory provisions. A financial role, we ensure that state spending is for allowable purposes and meets the required minimum level. In brief, the TANF maintenance – (inaudible) – requirement is that a state must spend at least a specified amount of state funds for benefits and services for members of needy families each year.

We analyze this information through quarterly financial reports and audits. We have a work participation role where we measure participation of adult recipients in work activities to ensure that activity requirements are met. The general state rules are just to determine their eligibility requirements. Again, there's a lot of flexibility there. Benefit levels, income and asset limits – (inaudible) – policies, et cetera, and to develop and provide a variety of non-cash services for families with children.

So general federal oversight. States must report data to HHS. Some of this data includes information on the case load, like the number of families, children, characteristics of those families, financial information such as information on how they're spending the money, work participation, what adults are doing.

A state submits state TANF plans which detail how they'll operate their programs, and this is about every two to three years we review these plans and work with the state on questions that we have, ultimately determining the plan complete and sending out a plan completion letter.

States also submit work certification plans that detail how they will verify hours of participation. We also review single state audit findings and issue for penalties for noncompliance. Overall, to contrast our program with most of the other partner programs, we have limited ability to regulate. We don't have the deep monitoring that other programs do where program staff go in and look at every detail. Our main oversight comes through the work participation rate process and the single state audit process.

So this chart details FY 2016 info. It shows basically that TANF means a lot of different things to a lot of different states. TANF can be spent on a range of things. Only about half is what one would typically think of as welfare. Spending is shifted more toward other activities and less toward the core over the years since TANF's inception.

When we talk about TANF assistance, we're talking about the dark blue basic assistance slice on the chart, 23.9 percent of the money. And then there's a light blue. Childcare might be assistance. You can also see that work, education, and training activities comprise 9.2 percent. Sometimes folks might be getting things that are non-assistance services. State-by-state spending charts and more details are on our website.

JULIE SIEGEL: And I'm just going to jump in and saying – this is Julie Siegel. I just – because it's such a strange thing to say that someone's getting non-assistance, what we mean by that is something that is outside our technical definition of assistance, but they're still benefits and services that they're entitled to. Don't want you to think that we're non-assisting people. Anyway, but that's what, as Rachel just said, basically, the left-hand side of that pie chart represents. OK. So forward. OK.

MS. GWILLIAM: OK. So now, we're going to talk about TANF statutory work activities. We have core activities and non-core activities. Basically, the TANF work participation requirements define and limit what counts toward the rate, and they require detailed reporting. Under the law for a family to count in a state's overall work participation rate for a month, a work-eligible individual in the family must participate for an average of 30 hours per week, of which at least an average of 20 hours per week must be in one or more of the nine core activities listed here.

The other three non-core activities listed may count for any remaining hours beyond the core hour requirement. So basically, these are the activities that count in the rate. There are activities that don't count toward the work participation rate that may still be allowable uses of TANF funds, just as a side note. So people working in these activities are in the basic assistance or cash grants portion of the previous pie chart. So in short, those getting assistance are those who are subject to the rates.

Combined plans include WIOA core programs but at least one combined state plan partner program such as TANF. States with combined WIOA plans including TANF include these 15 shown also in this map of the U.S. We note that this list of states with combined plans may change because amendments are coming in.

Of course not all partnerships are new with the verse of WIOA. State TANF has been working with labor for years, and we've been good partners together. We see WIOA collaborations as a way to take those partnerships forward, and we can always strengthen existing or form new partnerships.

Here we wish to point out the benefits of partnering with TANF. We have a lot of experience with hard-to-serve populations. Also, TANF agencies know the importance of and how to provide work support, such as childcare and transportation. We also wanted to point out the youth fund requirement with WIOA.

WIOA requires the minimum of 75 percent of state and local youth funding to be used for out-of-school youth age 16 to 24 who are not attending school and must meet multiple conditions. There are a lot of young parents in the TANF program who can benefit from the supports provided with this new fund. We also do a lot of research on what works.

We wanted to bring up the coaching model here. We've been very interested recently in integrating things like executive functioning principles, soft skills activities, and case management coaching in order to improve economic success for TANF recipients. In 2015 we hosted a webinar to help participants better integrate case management approaches.

The webinar provided an overview of executive functioning and brain science research with human services and we've been human services, looking at improving social and economic development among TANF recipients and most skilled individuals. It also showed less – (inaudible) – strategies from Ramsey County Minnesota, which has been just fabulous at improving economic outcomes for clients using these tools.

We also published a practice brief in November 2017 which you can also see the link to on the slide which highlighted the efforts of four of the Policy Academy teams in redesigning their TANF case management systems to support client coaching and motivational interview strategies. As a side note, our policy, when I say our academy, we had a Assistance to Family Stability National Policy Academy, which was an 18-month initiative sponsored by OFA where eight state and local teams designed and built systems to improve family economic security. If you'd like to know more, the link to the webinar is on the slide. All right.

OK. So other innovations in TANF. We're also in the career pathways game. We issued a career pathways program instruction or PI. It was written to encourage TANF agencies to provide career pathway opportunities for TANF recipients and other low income individuals. For those of you who don't know, a PI is kind of self-regulatory guidance, like a TEGL. Career pathways can address some of the barriers that TANF recipients face to finding work by combing adult basic education, occupational training, career and academic advising, and support services.

We encourage TANF agencies to adopt policies and practices that connect families to career pathways, helping parents receive the training and credentials they need to obtain jobs and wages that are family sustaining. TANF agencies can also actively engage with workforce agencies and education providers and employers to create or strengthen career pathways that are accessible to TANF recipients.

HPOG or the Health Profession Opportunity Grants program is a discretionary grants program housed with us in the Office of Family Assistance. It provides funds for demonstration projects to provide TANF recipients and other low income individuals with opportunities for education, training, and advancements that lead to jobs that pay well and address the healthcare profession's workforce needs.

HPOG grantees are a postsecondary educational institution, workforce investment boards, state or local government agencies, and community-based organizations. And the projects are basically intended to address the shortfall and supply of healthcare professionals and the increasing requirement for postsecondary education to secure these jobs.

TANF and One-Stop. As many of you know, TANF is a mandatory One-Stop partner. It was optional under WIOA. A governor can opt out of this mandatory requirement. This means that TANF would not be a required partner in the state or within specific local areas in the state. If the governor opts out, however, local TANF programs may still work in collaboration or partnership with local One-Stops to delivery employment and training services to the TANF population.

One-Stops have to provide individuals with a chance to initiate an application for TANF benefits and services. This could perhaps be through the provision of paper application forms or a link to the application website. And TANF agencies must ensure access to career services at the One-Stop, and by career services we mean those job training activities that we were talking about.

We have some examples of TANF partnerships that seem to be going well. In Maryland the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation designated the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services as an affiliate career center to offer services for clients receiving public assistance, TANF, SNAP, and foster care youth. The Department of Social Services refers individuals on public assistance or foster youth to the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation for employment assistance.

In Texas the Health and Human Services Commission conducts TANF income eligibility, and the Texas Workforce Commission administers the Choices Employment Program for TANF recipients. Choices staff are collocated in workforce solutions offices. Key to making this work between the agencies is automated data exchanges. Texas has nightly interfaces between the two automated systems to be able to serve the common client, and about 75 percent of TANF customers are co-enrolled in either employment services and WIOA.

In Iowa the Department of Human Services administers the state's TANF cash assistance program and the employment and training program for TANF cash assistance participants, known as Promise Jobs. DHS contracts with the state's Iowa workforce development agency to provide Promise Jobs services. The partnership requires a joint decision making process between both agencies on topics like role changes, systems changes, training, quality assurance, and electronic data sharing. The agencies meet monthly to discuss policy and procedures, performance measures, and improvement strategies.

This list might look pretty familiar. We showed you the list of employment and training services that count towards the work participation rate, and many of these TANF employment and training services are from that same list. TANF, again, is lots of different things to different people and can connect those on cash assistance to services they need in a variety of ways. It's a win-win because a lot of these activities help the TANF program meet their work rate, but they also help on the WIOA side. There can be co-enrollment, et cetera.

We have some examples of TANF employment and training collaborations. I'll highlight about one from each area here and talk about some of the others on the next slide. Some of these are multi-faceted and might actually fit in more than one category, but here is just a sample.

In the education realm – and with education we're talking about GED, adult education, career-related training – West Virginia started a pilot partnership between its Department of Health and Human Resources and the Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College. It is designed to help those receiving TANF enroll in the college and work towards the certificate or degree program. As part of the pilot, local employers were contacted to determine skills needed in the workforce so that the cohort of students can be prepared for particular emerging occupations.

Under on-the-job training I wanted to bring up Pennsylvania here. The Pennsylvania Keystone Education Yields Success or KEYS program uses TANF funds to provide TANF participants vocation-specific work experience in over 100 community colleges, state-owned universities, and career and technical schools across the state, coupled with two-year degrees and shorter-term educational programs. Students engaged in internships and practicums earned wages subsidized by KEYS that are counted at a 50 percent disregard for TANF eligibility. Participants are enrolled – are considered enrolled in vocational education as part of the state's work participation rate for the first 12 months.

Under work experience Washington State's TANF program's welfare to work component called Work First offers two subsidized employment opportunities. We have the Community Jobs Program that offers temporary subsidized employment where participants work 20 hours per week at local nonprofit organizations and public agencies to gain work experience and job skills.

Participants also enroll in at least 10 hours of additional activities like education, job readiness training, or community service, and clients participate in the program for up to six months. Second, we have the Career Jump Program where participants engage in paid work experience and on-the-job training at a nonprofit or for-profit employer for three months, after which the participant is placed on the employer's payroll.

With job skills training we have Oregon, which has launched the Rogue Educational Achievement Program in the Medford region, a pilot grant coordinated between the state's Department of Human Services and multiple workforce development partners to serve 150 TANF families and those families exiting TANF into career pathways training opportunities. This pilot leverages training funds as well as workforce skill-building activities through WIOA. Go ahead.

We have more emerging practices from the field in the realm of partnerships between TANF and WIOA, and I'll just point out really quick that, if you would like more info on any of these programs, please, please contact us. We have contact information at the end of this presentation. We'd be happy to get that to you.

Under common intake systems and co-enrollment I wanted to talk about Maryland. Maryland's goals include collocation of services, cross-training of staff, coordinating assessment policy, common intake, and completing memorandums of understanding and data sharing agreements. In Anne Arundel County, through both the TANF and SNAP programs, clients will work with an intake specialist to assess job readiness, barriers to employment, and other issues specific to the client base.

For career pathways I wanted to point out California where multiple workforce development and social service partners work together to move TANF participants through career pathways using a local partnership between the American Job Centers and workforce boards.

And for work-based learning and on-the-job training we have Kentucky's Ready to Work program that provides subsidized work study opportunities to TANF recipients pursuing education at one of the colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The work study positions are minimum wage for up to 30 hours per week, and the positions are located at a local nonprofit or for-profit employer.

Under adult education we have Virginia, which allows social services departments to place Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare or VIEW participants in high school equivalency preparation or career technical education programming. Participants who receive TANF and are able to work are required to participate in the VIEW program.

OK. So true or false? TANF participants or welfare recipients are generally not work ready and lack the basic skills to perform on the job. This is very much false. Most TANF recipients have a high school or higher level of education, and many have significant work experience. 54.7 percent of TANF adult recipients in fiscal year 2016 had completed high school or its equivalent.

Some may only need assistance with transportation or childcare or need cash assistance for a short period of time. Other recipients can benefit from job search services and connections to employers provided by One-Stops.

Hey. True or false? TANF is a complex and confusing program that may limit the ability of One-Stops to function according to their mission. True and false. Mostly false. Mostly false but also true. TANF is very complex, but it doesn't have to be a limitation. I know you heard that we have complex work requirements and that every hour has to be tracked, et cetera, but we assure you that this is not an obstacle.

The TANF agency knows how to deal with its own work rate, and making sure that we're partnered with the employment system only enhances that. TANF is a really flexible program that can provide employment and training services and work support such as childcare not only to TANF cash assistance recipients but also to other low income adults with children.

This flexibility can help facilitate integrated services to participants of both TANF and WIOA programs, non-custodial parents in particular. We have experience dealing with barriers to employment and providing work support in addressing the family responsibilities of that person working walking in. That person in his or her family will most likely be successful.

So we wanted to list some resources that we have here. OFA is heavily invested in increasing the coordination between TANF and WIOA stakeholders. For example – and we've hyperlinked these on the slides too so you can go to them and check them out later – we have the TANF WIOA resource hub. Our TA team, as well as this resource hub online hosted on the OFA peer TA website. The purpose of the hub is to continue the TANF WIOA conversation on a broader scale and bring a section of resources to a wide range of TANF and WIOA stakeholders.

We also are including info on the WIOA learning community affinity calls. Basically teams from the peer exchange workshop participated in two affinity calls that provided sites with a space to share updates on their collaboration progress and also provided them with strategies for data sharing and integration and a space for peer-to-peer dialogue. The call included a presentation from Mississippi State University which discussed their data sharing experience with the implementation of WIOA.

We also have the peer exchange workshop. The TA team – they're like total superstars here – planned and delivered the TANF WIOA peer exchange workshop which brought together 42 participants representing 17 from states across the country to further collaboration and planning around WIOA. And participating teams included Massachusetts, D.C., Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Nevada, and Oregon.

The national experts roundtable brought together 35 expert participants, including researchers, federal representatives, and state and local practitioners to discuss the common vision for the workforce system and identify challenges, strategies, and opportunities for making that vision a reality.

We had a webinar, "Building TANF and WIOA Partnerships to Improve TANF Recipient Employment Outcomes: Lessons Learned from TANF WIA Coordination." This was from January of 2015. The TA team coordinated this webinar focusing on building partnerships between TANF and WIOA systems to improve outcome for TANF recipients.

The new WIOA law established TANF as a required One-Stop partner, as we've talked about, and provided the option for states to submit a combined workforce development plan that includes TANF. And in this webinar, a panel of experts and officials from states and local areas shared their experience with TANF WIOA collaboration.

Then we have the TANF WIOA toolkit, which is an ongoing project. The TA team is coordinating the development of these virtual toolkits with field experts to support TANF programs with WIOA coordination.

So I'm also including our website here where we have financial data, reports and charts, policy guidance, technical assistance, TANF reports to Congress. The 12th report was recently posted. You may wish to go look at that to research more information. We also have a help for families section which helps families locate their Department of Social Services, their agency where they would go inquire about applying for TANF benefits.

We also have the welfare rules database which is maintained by the Urban Institute. It provides a comprehensive resource for anyone comparing cash assistance programs between states, researching changes in cash assistance rules within a single state, or looking for the most up-to-date information on the rules governing cash assistance in one state.

And if you have any questions, please contact Julie Siegel, our director of the Division of State TANF Policy. She's also right here though. So if you have any immediate questions, we'd be happy to answer them.

MS. SIEGEL: Is that where we are?

MS. GWILLIAM: And yeah. So if you have any questions, we are here.

MS. SIEGEL: And I'm just going to jump in with just a couple of quick thoughts. One is – well, first of all, thank you very much, Rachel. That was a lot of information in a short period of time, and I think you can get a sense from what Rachel was saying that TANF is a very diverse and varied kind of program or, as she said, not necessarily one program.

It's sort of a flexible funding stream that states can shape within the bounds of the TANF purposes and the federal state partnership that is reflected in our rules. And we're in the Division of State TANF Policy, but we do – I would like to mention that TANF also serves federally-recognized tribes that choose to operate TANF, but we will refer all those questions to our colleagues who deal with tribal TANF. So that was just one point I wanted to make.

I think we do have a couple of questions that have already come up that we can maybe address, some of which have disappeared from my screen, but this one is here.

"Does TANF have a targeted approach with disability populations? If yes, please briefly describe."

And I would say it depends on the state. So there's not a federal approach to serving people with disabilities. That would very much matter on state to state, just as Rachel was saying. There's really a lot of decision making that happens at the state level.

We did write into federal rules – well, really what we've said was, if someone's getting SSI or disability insurance, that they can be pulled out of our work participation rate. But obviously, there are a lot of people with disabilities who are not on SSI or other Social Security benefits. So that is very much a state or local decision.

And I think there was one other question – here it is – about transitional jobs, and yes. TANF can potentially pay for transitional jobs. We've worked with some of the folks who work on transitional jobs issues. Again, mostly what – from TANF's viewpoint, especially if – well, if it's a mixture of state and federal funds, it will need to be reasonably calculated to meet a TANF purpose, and then the families are generally low income and there's a child living with a parent or caretaker – relative caretaker. So yes. I guess it is possible.

MS. HARRIS: OK. First of all, thanks, Rachel and Julie. We have some questions in the room as well, but I will add on there I saw you guys used your true and false questions were a couple of the questions taken from the recent myth busters that were posted. So that's just a plug for you guys to go on WorkforceGPS to get the myth busters, and they have a whole page of TANF-related questions that will dispel a lot of the myths about the TANF program.

OK. Julie, we have a couple of questions in the room. Who wants to go first? OK. Hold on. They're getting the microphones together, and say your name and where you're from.

Q: This is Meredith – (inaudible) – from ODEP.

MS. HARRIS: Can you hear Meredith?

MS. SIEGEL: No.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Well, Meredith, come – yeah. You have to come over here. OK. This is Meredith, and she's from ODEP.

Q: OK.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah. I don't want to have to repeat herself too many times. OK.

Q: Hi. A couple of us were just wondering if you know which states – which governors have opted out of the mandatory TANF partnership with the AJCs.

Q: And what the rationality is – (inaudible) –.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah.

Q: And what their rationale was for opting out.

MS. GWILLIAM: We do have the list. Yeah. So here's the list, those who opted out are – those which opted out, Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Kansas, Maine, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin.

MS. SIEGEL: And one interesting – at least to me, interesting one, Alabama, the governor opted out but also decided to be a combined plan partner with TANF. So I guess – I don't know if there was – was there justification? Was there reasoning? I'm not sure that there actually had to be, but I think that there may be a lot of places where the governor just wants to make that choice themselves.

MS. HARRIS: OK. OK. Yes. And for those opted out governors, they had to send a letter to the secretary – the – yes – and HHS secretary. Those letters had to go there with their request to opt out, and it had to be approved in advance. So we have the list of states too. So I can get that to you afterwards, if you need to. So they did have to send letters to get not approval but just so we can know that that was their option. Does that help? OK.

Anybody else in the room? I have a couple of questions, but I want to see if anybody else in the room has any questions. OK.

Q: – (inaudible) –.

MS. HARRIS: OK. My question is – I have two. One is that work experience program in Washington State, you guys mentioned that they have up to six months to be on the subsidized wages. After the six months is the expectation that they go to work for that employer?

DAMON WATERS: Hi, Charlotte. This is Damon.

MS. HARRIS: Hi, Damon.

MR. WATERS: The hope is that they will go to work for that employer, but there's no requirement.

MS. HARRIS: OK.

MR. WATERS: So after the subsidy ends, there's the hope that the employer had a good experience and that there was the opportunity for the continued employment, but there's no requirement.

MS. HARRIS: OK. And the next one is related to the career pathways program. Do you guys also use the career pathways information that was jointly created with the – with ETA that's on WorkforceGPS?

LISA WASHINGTON-THOMAS: Hi, Charlotte. This is Lisa Washington-Thomas, and yes. We do. We're members of the interagency career pathways toolkit. So we follow the definition, and we coordinate with our colleagues.

MS. HARRIS: Marvelous. OK. We have another question in the room. Dana?

Q: It's about the eligibility, the thinking – (inaudible) – eligible to obtain them, or does the state have – (inaudible) –?

MS. HARRIS: OK. Her question is it's related to eligibility. Does the national office or the federal program dictate how long a person can be on TANF, or is that a state policy? Was that your question? OK. Yes.

MS. SIEGEL: This is Julie Siegel. It's largely a state matter. There is a federal time limit of 60 months regardless of – lifetime limit of 60 months in any state. However, states can use state only funds to extend that time if they want to and – or in some cases states have shorter time limits. So it's very much within the state's purview to control.

MS. HARRIS: OK. That helps. Any other questions on the phone?

Female: Charlotte, can I – I just want to say, in case people aren't looking, Sara Hastings, who's the leader of the career pathways interagency group, has posted several links to the career pathways toolkit and the blank letter that might be helpful to people. Thanks, Sara.

MS. HARRIS: Great. Anything from the regions? Yeah. It was of course a lot of good information. I hope it was very helpful and useful. There are a lot of nods in the room that this was very helpful, very useful information, and the links are going to be great as well.

Next month we'll have the WIOA youth formula programs. The YouthBuild programs will be the next WIOA brief, and you'll be getting information on that. It will be on March 1st, if you just want to save your date, but that's coming out soon. I'm looking for any last questions from the field.

MS. SIEGEL: So while we're looking for that I'll just say that this was sort of a whirlwind overview of how TANF works, and there's – obviously, it is a complicated program, but I hope that what you could take away from this is that TANF is really a great partner for labor and education and HUD and FNS and all our various partners out there. We bring either some of the caseload that you need to serve or some of the expertise that Rachel was talking about.

And while we do have – I mean, clearly, it was a very simple work participation rate. Rachel explained it. You saw it right there. It's not complicated at all, but we do have our own – we can chase our own tails on work participation or other complex things, but that definitely not a barrier to helping move forward and serving low income families and families with barriers to employment as WIOA phrases it. That's something we can work on together, and we very much want to work with all of our partners out there.

MS. HARRIS: Yes. Julie, this is Charlotte again. What – this is related to monitoring and I knew this already working with you guys but I'm not sure if everyone knew that you guys don't go out and do the physical monitoring like a lot of the partner programs do. How can regions support you guys in that effort when they go out looking at programs?

MS. SIEGEL: When you say regions, you mean the ETA regions?

MS. HARRIS: Yes. ETA regions. Thank you.

MS. SIEGEL: Well, I'm glad you asked that question because we are right now working with our colleagues at ETA and education on a set of shared standard operating procedures for monitoring. And because we like to say that TANF doesn't monitor with a capital M, we monitor with a little m, we're not really in that game. It's not part of our – the way that we oversee the program.

So instead we're trying very much to partner with ETA and have them be able to bring some of the TANF side of things to their piece of monitoring. So we're – in fact, I think right before this webinar I was sending an e-mail on that very topic. So I think stay tuned. I know there's a pilot that your region one has worked on and it looks great and we're very interested in that on monitoring in a way that would incorporate some TANF issues. So I think just stay tuned.

MS. HARRIS: OK. So thanks a lot. I don't see any more questions on the phone or in the room. Appreciate you guys, TANF partners. Appreciate you coming in. Again, a lot of good information.

(END)