

# METROPOLITAN ACTION COMMISSION'S 2GEN/WFA PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY

by Metropolitan Action Commission

Region 4B • Nashville, Tennessee  
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Metropolitan Action Commission



## Head Start • Early Head Start • Workforce Development • Job Training

### INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Metropolitan Action Commission (MAC) partners with families to achieve their goals of getting out of poverty through a 2Generation/Whole Family Approach Initiative (2Gen/WFA). MAC's initiative **provides short-term and high-yield job trainings aimed to help Head Start/Early Head Start parents move toward attaining living-wage jobs.** This type of opportunity creates a pathway out of poverty for many families. The results are also correlated to child outcomes for those children whose parents participate in 2Gen initiatives.

### LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

MAC began their three-year 2Gen/WFA initiative pilot in 2015 after listening to customer voice their concerns regarding the need for living wage jobs. With Metro Action staff, customers set goals to get the skills to move toward attaining those living wage jobs and caring for their families.

### ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

CSBG staff were a part of the 2Gen/WFA initiative pilot team. Training fees for CompTIA A+, Child Development Associates (CDA), and Youth Technology Camp (completion awards and laptops) were paid by CSBG. CSBG funds were also used for rent, utility assistance, help with childcare and transportation vouchers.

### TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The transformation impact of this initiative can be seen in the lives of the customers, the community and the agency. At the end of last year (2019) 15 Head



Start/Early Head Start parents from the last cohort were completing their paid internship over the next two months with five Metro Nashville Government IT departments including receiving full benefits and \$20 hourly, with one of them already with two job offers in the IT field.

The MAC 2Gen/WF Initiative Evaluation Report of this pilot completed in 2019 details such results as follows:

- Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents that completed either CDA or CompTIA A+ between 2016 and 2019 were employed in full-time jobs at the time of the survey (62.5%).
- Nearly half of program completers reported their wages had increased “a lot” since before the training (46.2% and an additional 38.5% reported wages had increased “a little”).
- Parents reported feeling less stressed about providing for their families.

Metro Action Commission was selected by the Kresge Foundation for their national Next Generation Initiative.

The agency received \$500,000 to advance person-centered, outcomes-based, data driven work that advances racial equity using two-generation, whole family approaches.

The agency has literally transformed. As a result of work in 2Gen and recognition by the Kresge foundation, the local government determined Metro Action was the best agency to assume the responsibilities of the city of Nashville's Workforce and Youth Division. Consequently, effective July 1, 2020, those functions were moved to Metro Action.

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### The achievements at Metro Action have not come in an instant or overnight. This long and slow transformation started 20 years ago

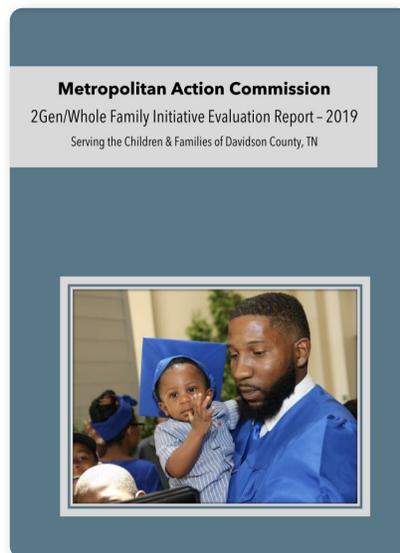
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The achievements at Metro Action have not come in an instant or overnight. This long and slow transformation started 20 years ago, when the agency started 1) its shift to being mission and results centered, 2) breaking down organizational silos, and 3) putting an emphasis on being one agency.

### EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

In 2019, MAC released the study of their pilot three-year 2Gen/WFA initiative. The evaluation was completed by Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC (TPMA). It included participant experiences and outcomes, as well as lessons learned by MAC through their implementation of the initiative. As part of the third-party review of MAC's programs, TPMA gathered feedback from MAC leadership and staff, training providers, and current and past program participants through interviews, focus groups, and participant survey.

Link to [MAC 2Gen/WFA Initiative Evaluation Report.](#)



### EQUITY LENS

Metro Action uses a number of data metrics that allow the agency to view their work through an equity lens. They examine the outcomes for children and families as well as other customers served through an equity-based lens with data found in various sections that support each area. Two years ago, MAC invested in Tableau, a data visualization software system, hired a data team, and spent a year training all staff on collection, use, and analysis of data. The focus in this area now enables the agency to evaluate outcomes along a number of factors from a diversity and inclusion perspective.

MAC also reviews the structure of their teaching teams based on the race and ethnicity of the children and adult learners in the classrooms. As previously mentioned, they track staff feedback on diversity and inclusion including race and ethnicity. Examples of some data metrics used in the program follow. Because Metro Action chose the field of technology as one of the key areas of focus for their 2 Gen work, national and local data indicates an under representation of both women and minorities in the field. Consequently their 2 Gen work has specific elements that involve the inclusion of gender and race data in examination of outcomes.

MAC also works to recruit women in their 2Gen work including addressing barriers that make the program difficult to complete such as childcare and providing a paid internship allowing parents to maintain employment while completing the program. The ability to advance equity is possible both through an intentional focus on recruitment as well as providing supports that make success a higher likelihood for women and minorities.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

The customer voice remains the impetus for this 2Gen/WFA initiative. For example, it was noted that some families had children that required separate care because they had multiple children, and not all their children could attend Early Head Start or Head Start because they were too young or too old. The state's Smart Steps program was one solution. In 2019, MAC started providing supplementary childcare for those who needed the help.

MAC staff would regularly stop by classes to observe and talk with program participants to see how they were doing, what they might need and how they could work together to meet those needs.

Surveys and focus groups, as found in the MAC 2Gen/WFA Initiative Evaluation Report, provided customer feedback. 83.2% of respondents report being either satisfied or very satisfied with the program in which they enrolled. However, respondents reported it could be difficult to stay motivated due to personal challenges.

Metro Action continues to look for ways to amplify customer voices and interest in policy discussions.

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