



SWFI Bright Ideas: August 2019 – September 2019

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between August 2019 and September 2019. The topics covered in the current brief include child care; employment activities; program design, practices, and approaches; training or education; and sustainability and systems integration. Earlier briefs, listed on the next page, explore practices between June 2016 and July 2019. In addition, Promising Practices briefs discuss grantees' approaches to child care and sustainability. These briefs are designed to encourage peer grantees to share their innovative approaches with each other.

How did the TA team identify Bright Ideas?

We used the following information from grantees to identify Bright Ideas:

- **Reviewing grantees' quarterly reports.** Every quarter, Mathematica staff review grantees' reports to document practices that grantees identify as promising.
- **Regular contact between grantees and Technical Assistance (TA) coaches, DSI, and FPOs.** The TA team regularly records and categorizes new approaches, changes to existing strategies, creative partnerships, and other elements of program design that are identified through contact with grantees.

To help grantees identify practices that are relevant to them, we sort Bright Ideas into specific topics and then subtopics (see Table 1). We use the following topics:

- **Child care**, which relates to how SWFI grantees are meeting the child care needs of their participants, such as helping parents access child care subsidies.
- **Employment activities**, which relate to activities aimed at helping SWFI participants enter and maintain employment, such as partnering with employers.
- **Program design**, which relates to how SWFI grantees are designing their programs and service delivery to meet SWFI participants' needs, such as building regular communication across programs.
- **Program practices and approach**, which relates to how SWFI grantees are implementing their program, such as how they are conducting outreach and recruitment and progressing towards systems integration.
- **Training or education**, which relates to the training or educational services grantees are offering SWFI participants, such as how they are developing career pathways to middle- and high-skilled employment.
- **Sustainability and integration of child care and workforce systems**, which relates to how grantees are preparing to sustain the grant and make lasting changes to child care and workforce systems.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Do these ideas work?

Bright Ideas briefs provide grantees with a range of new strategies and elements of program design that are being used by other grantees; however, these features have not always been linked with positive outputs or outcomes (or indeed with any outputs or outcomes if the approaches are new).

More detailed Promising Practices briefs, released separately and less often, will explore practices that have been linked with positive outcomes. Please keep reporting your Bright Ideas, along with any outcomes, so that these can support peer sharing and other TA for you and your peer grantees! Please note that Bright Ideas briefs provide only a snapshot of the work grantees are doing, and not all grantees will be highlighted in any given brief.

Prior Bright Ideas and Promising Practices

- SWFI Bright Ideas: February 2019 to July 2019. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/10/31/20/37/SWFI_Bright_Ideas_Brief_-_February_2019_-_July_2019
- SWFI Sustainability Promising Practices Brief. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/08/11/32/SWFI_Promising_Practices_-_Child_Care_and_Workforce_System_Integration_and_Program_Sustainability
- SWFI Bright Ideas: October 2018 to January 2019. Available at: <https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/04/22/16/00/SWFI-Bright-Ideas-Brief-October-2018-January-2019>
- SWFI Bright Ideas: July 2018 to September 2018. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/11/16/20/09/SWFI_Bright_Ideas_Brief_-_July-September-2018
- SWFI Bright Ideas: May 2018 to June 2018. Available at: <https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/08/17/16/09/SWFI-Bright-Ideas-Brief-June-2018>
- SWFI Bright Ideas: January 2018 to April 2018. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/05/25/17/04/SWFI_April_Bright_Ideas_Brief
- SWFI Bright Ideas: April 2017 to December 2017. Available at: <https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/02/15/16/24/Bright-Ideas-Tip-Sheet>
- SWFI Child Care Promising Practices Brief. Available at: <https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/12/07/14/17/Child-Care-Promising-Practices-Brief>
- SWFI Bright Ideas: June 2016 to March 2017. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/10/03/12/27/July_Bright_Ideas_Brief



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Table 1. Bright Ideas for the period August 2019 – September 2019

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Sustainability and systems integration			
Integrating workforce and child care systems	OAI, Inc.	As described in the July to September 2018 Bright Ideas brief , OAI Inc. has reduced child care costs for the program, reduced wait time for participants to receive child care assistance, and increased the number of families with access to a long-term child care assistance program through a partnership with Illinois Action for Children.	For the year ending June 30, 2019, OAI leveraged over \$262,888 in child care subsidies for participants through Illinois Action for Children’s support.
Integrating workforce and child care systems	City of Long Beach, Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network	As described in the February 2019 – July 2019 Bright Ideas brief , City of Long Beach, Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network (Pacific Gateway) has contracted with a child care provider who can offer child care onsite while short-term trainings are going on. Long Beach has also made their facility more child-friendly to help encourage career specialists to enroll families in child care and to make the space more inviting to parents. They set up an area for children and are providing a child care resource guide in the waiting room.	In addition to using onsite child care to support SWFI parents, other agencies that are part of the City of Long Beach are using this short-term child care as a model for providing child care during public meetings to allow parents to more easily participate.
Integrating workforce and housing systems	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board d/b/a CareerSource North Central Florida (CareerSource NCFL)	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board d/b/a CareerSource North Central Florida (CareerSource NCFL) is working with their local Housing Authority to provide its “Own Your Future” entrepreneurial skills class to SWFI-eligible participants who are participating in a program at the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority has a grant so that SWFI participants who gain employment will retain their rent vouchers for three years even if they start earning more income. This will help avoid “cliff effects”. Cliff effects can occur if public benefit programs phase out quickly when participants’ earnings increase; participants may lose benefits that are more worth more than their gains in income.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Integrating workforce and employer systems	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks is partnering with the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, which is made up of several local hospitals and medical providers in specific Memphis area zip codes. Human Resources staff from local hospitals and medical providers participate in this collaborative to align their hiring systems in order to give preference to participants living in the targeted zip codes and hire them more quickly. Memphis Bioworks is working with their training partners to identify students who live in the targeted zip codes in order to help the students find job placements using this preference.	Through this partnership, Memphis Bioworks introduced the Collaborative to, and recommended using, the HireSelect pre-training advising tool. The Collaborative adopted this tool, which is used to help new employees at the local hospitals and medical providers learn more about soft-skills, to help reduce barriers to employment for participants.
Child care			
Information and referrals to help find care	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD)	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD) staff created a Google map that shows all child care center partners to help parents identify the best child care centers based on the locations of their home and employer. The map continues to be a useful tool to connect participants to the child care provider most convenient for them. In September, a family child care provider that works closely with ABCD staff reached out to inform staff that there would be open slots and the provider could offer before- and after-work care.	The map has helped all parents who do not have child care when they enter GATE access child care that is conveniently located for them.
Structuring work activities to meet child care schedules or facilitate access to child care	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has prioritized accessibility to childcare when identifying new training providers. They recently developed a relationship with two new training providers: one in healthcare and one in IT. The healthcare training provider has on-site childcare which is on the grantee's list of approved childcare providers (approval by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)). The IT training provider has child care options located close to the training site.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Employment activities			
Employer partnerships	Moore Community House	Moore Community House has partnered with Ingalls Shipbuilding to create a boot camp for participants who have completed the general industry course, which provides further training in advanced manufacturing. The boot camp provides specific industry information and skills needed for shipbuilding. The employer is then hiring participants who complete this boot camp as pre-apprentices with a \$18/hour wage.	After completion of the boot camp for its first two cohorts, Ingalls Shipbuilding hired 32 SWFI participants with an average starting wage of \$18/hour.
Program practices and approach			
Outreach and recruitment	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix is streamlining their enrollment process by combining recruited participants with referrals from their training providers into cohorts. They have asked their training providers to pick one day per month where they email all of their referrals to SWFI. While SWFI staff previously spent time fielding regular referrals from providers one at a time, they hope this cohort model will lead to more efficient enrollment practices.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has been conducting outreach through WIOA partners and in Head Starts and schools in their communities. SWFI staff held outreach orientation sessions at the Human Services Department Family Service Centers and ARIZONA@WORK One-Stop Centers; both of these organizations serve families and parents that may be eligible for co-enrollment in SWFI. SWFI staff have also been invited to speak at Parents' Nights at both Head Starts and schools in several area districts.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Outreach and recruitment	Community College of Aurora (CCA)	To address the increased recruitment requirements of participating in the randomized controlled trial, Community College of Aurora (CCA) has implemented a new recruitment plan. The plan involves the addition of case management, cohorts for participants, registration holds that require approval for students to enroll in classes outside their training program, and monitoring dropouts. CCA continues to see improvements in recruitment and retention. Of the five students enrolled after implementing this new plan, one student completed the program on schedule and the rest of the cohort will complete the following semester. CCA worked closely with CCD to improve their enrollment by developing the short-term trainings. CCA and Community College of Denver launched a marketing campaign through Facebook. CCA has begun to meet its Year 3 target for enrollment and is shifting its focus to retention and completion.	CCA and CCD reached over 100 potential participants through the Facebook campaign.
Outreach and recruitment	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida (OIC) has a new contracted position for "enrollment champions". They have contracted with two people with presence in the community to work as recruiters because of their personal or professional contacts. Enrollment champions can get information about SWFI to more agencies with whom they have pre-existing relationships. The SWFI team has a database in which they enter information about participants based on a prequalifying survey that champions use with potential candidates.	About 10 potential participants have been referred to SWFI through these champions, although none have enrolled yet.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Engagement and retention	Community College of Aurora (CCA)	As noted, CCA has increased its recruitment and enrollment while also shifting its attention to engaging participants and retaining them in the program to support completion. CCA has implemented a plan to increase engagement consisting of (1) case management conducted by the Achievement Coaches, (2) a cohort model, (3) registration holds that require check-ins with case managers if a student would like to register for a course outside the approved certificate program, and (4) monitoring drop outs. CCA plans to monitor engagement and retention to see if any component in this plan might need additional support or fine tuning. Achievement coaches have continued engaging students as they wait for training to begin and have worked with WorkLife Partnership to develop engagement strategies.	In process.
Engagement and retention	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC staff have been making after-work calls from their personal cellphones and found they could connect with more participants that way. They then motivated participants around the importance of reaching goals they set for themselves to encourage them to complete credentials.	Five participants were certified through these intensive staff efforts.
Engagement and retention	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace works to maintain an open channel of communication with their training providers so they can identify individuals who need more support during their training program. Providers email or call The WorkPlace when they feel that a participant needs additional support. The WorkPlace counselor then follows up with the participant to explain which supports are available to them. In some instances, the WorkPlace provides a simple referral, while other times the participant comes to the office and SWFI staff assemble a support team that may include the Child Care Concierge, Life Skills Coach, Career Counselor, and a SWFI manager to craft a plan of action for that person based on their needs.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Engagement and retention	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace has partnered with their communications department to use Constant Contact and Remind to send emails and text messages, respectively, to their participants. They now use these services to communicate with participants about Job Clubs, supportive services, and refresher courses available to them based on which training provider they used. Undeliverable emails and text messages also indicate when the SWFI team needs to find up-to-date contact information in order to reach a participant.	In process.
Participant follow-up	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD)	ABCD staff are conducting the second retention check with GATE graduates in order to report outcomes. Staff reach out to graduates at least three times to confirm graduates' employment, wages, and discuss any barriers to employment the graduate may be facing. ABCD staff report that graduates are generally employed and staff are providing referrals to those not currently employed.	In process.
Participant follow-up	City of Long Beach, Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network	Pacific Gateway is conducting activities to learn about participant experiences. They are calling participants to find out whether they were offered child care. They had an external staff person shadow customers to provide feedback about the experience of receiving services.	In process.
Participant follow-up	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix hired a new administrative aide to assist with performance reporting and participant follow-up. The administrative aide will keep in touch with completed program participants to report credentials and other outcomes accurately, while case managers can focus their attention on serving participants currently in training.	In process.
Building relationships	OAI, Inc.	OAI, Inc. hosted an appreciation BBQ to support relationships with child care providers and employer partners. This was an opportunity to thank providers and partners for their support for the SWFI program. Community partners also attended the BBQ and connected with child care providers and participants. OAI also acknowledged the successes of participants during the BBQ.	The BBQ resulted in one new participant and OAI expects additional participants.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Building relationships	Rochester Rehabilitation Center (RRC)	Rochester Rehabilitation Center (RRC)'s SWFI team continued monthly or as-needed meetings with strategic partners Action for a Better Community (ABC) and the Child Care Council (CCC) to review best practices, trends and ongoing barriers faced by SWFI participants. During these meetings, the SWFI team discusses training program options and better ways to increase enrollment.	In process.
Training or education			
Short-term intensive training	Community College of Aurora (CCA)	As described in the February 2019 – July 2019 Bright Ideas brief , Community College of Aurora (CCA) has added short-term trainings to serve more students and focus on retention and completion. These trainings include boot camps, an accelerated IT certificate, a mental health certificate and an add-on Data Analytics certificate for immigrant students with bachelor's degrees from their home country. These trainings have increased enrollment and will potentially lead to an increase in the number of participants who complete training. The accelerated IT technology training condenses a year-long program into a semester and provides wraparound services, such as in-class tutors, to support students. More short-term trainings will be implemented between August and October 2019.	CCA is now close to meeting its Year 3 enrollment targets.
Short-term intensive training	Moore Community House	Moore Community House has developed a shorter term training program called Trades 101 that addresses the need of participants to have shorter term training and earn credentials requested by advanced manufacturing employers. During this two-week class, participants receive OSHA 10 and forklift safety certificates. In addition, participants receive priority to attend Moore Community House's in-house 8-week training class or boot camp with Ingalls Shipbuilding.	In process.
Credentialing	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace has undertaken several unique strategies to increase their credentialing rate. These strategies include partnering participants with student mentors from previous cohorts, working with training providers to provide exams onsite at their training facilities, and providing study materials and transportation for provider-supplied study groups.	The number of credentials earned has increased from prior quarters.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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In-house training	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (now Total Action for Progress; TAP)	TAP has brought their certified clinical medical assistant (CMA) training in-house. The CMA is in high demand in their region; many hospitals and doctor's offices are hiring CMAs instead of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Most CMA jobs are 9-5 with benefits, which work well for SWFI parents. TAP was limited by the number of times per year and the time of day the CMA training was offered in their region. Additionally, TAP was not satisfied with the quality of local CMA trainings. They now control training quality and the instructors, and can hold classes during daytime hours to better accommodate Head Start parents, their core client base.	The first in-house CMA cohort had a 100% graduation and certification rate; 2 of 10 already have job offers in their field. This is compared to a 60-70% CMA completion rate with external providers.
Work experience	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (now Total Action for Progress; TAP)	Total Action for Progress (TAP) has built relationships with their local Health Department, clinics, and doctor's offices to provide work experience opportunities to their participants. They believe this work experience has made a significant difference for their certified medical assistant (CMA) and certified nursing assistant (CNA) students moving into their careers after training.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Adapting curricula to provide education and training	The WorkPlace	<p>The WorkPlace continued to make improvements to “Foundation Skills Workshop Week” or “Foundations Week”, which participants enroll in prior to Occupational Skills Training, and the workshops they provide to participants during and after training. Foundations Week was previously described in the October 2018 – January 2019 Bright Ideas brief. This week of purposeful workshops encompasses both personal and professional development topics. To respond to the needs of their participants, The WorkPlace added an additional day to Foundations Week comprised of two modules: (1) <i>Successful Study Strategies</i> to equip participants with the study skills necessary for credentialing exams, and (2) <i>Conflict Resolution</i> to prepare participants to handle conflict in their future workplace. Finally, The WorkPlace worked with Brandeis University to incorporate concrete career mapping activities into Foundations Week and subsequent workshops. The first workshop on career mapping, <i>Navigating Your Healthcare Career</i>, takes place during Foundations Week. Other career mapping workshops, such as <i>Starting a New Job</i> and <i>Making Your Employer Work For You</i>, occur monthly. The WorkPlace couples <i>Filling Out Employment Paperwork</i> with their monthly Job Clubs. Depending on the activity, the WorkPlace invites those who are waiting to begin training, are currently in training, and/or have recently completed training and are ready for their employment search.</p>	<p>Foundations Week has decreased individual career advising time, reduced the time a participant takes to enroll in training, increased healthcare training enrollments, reduced dropout rates, and diversified the training tracks accessed.</p>
Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	<p>As described in the February 2019 – July 2019 Bright Ideas brief, Vermont Technical College worked with employers and its partner institutions of higher education to identify new training options that would meet the needs of SWFI participants and employers. The grantee has begun offering classes in SolidWorks, CNC machining, and welding. These are shorter-term training programs that will better align with participants’ need to gain a credential quickly and begin work.</p>	<p>Staff believe the addition of the new training programs has led to increased enrollment and more positive relationships with community partners.</p>



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College is working with Vermont Adult Learning and Community College of Vermont to develop a certified production technician training class for the English Language Learner population. Vermont has a high population of new citizens that will benefit from this specialized class.	In process.

* Note: Bright Ideas that seem linked to positive outcomes may be highlighted in a forthcoming Promising Practices or Bright Ideas brief if applicable. Stay tuned for updates.