



## SWFI Bright Ideas: January 2018 – April 2018

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between January 2018 and April 2018. The topics covered in the current brief include child care; employment activities; program design, practices, and approaches; and training or education. Earlier Bright Ideas briefs explore practices between June 2016 and December 2017.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a Promising Practices brief discusses grantees' approaches to child care.<sup>2</sup> 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 five 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.
- **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.

<sup>1</sup> SWFI Bright Ideas: June 2016 to March 2017. Available at:

[https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/10/03/12/27/July\\_Bright\\_Ideas\\_Brief](https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/10/03/12/27/July_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>.

<sup>2</sup> SWFI Child Care Promising Practices Brief. Available at:

<https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/12/07/14/17/Child-Care-Promising-Practices-Brief>.



# Strengthening Working Families Initiative

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## **Do these ideas work?**

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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.



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**Table 1. Bright Ideas for the period January 2018–April 2018**

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
<b>Child care</b>			
Helping parents access affordable child care/early education	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (TAP Roanoke) has developed policies for providing financial support for unlicensed care, including a certification form that asks questions about the care setting, a health and safety tool for parents (parents are required to do their own assessments), and a support agreement.	These policies are valuable in TAP Roanoke’s rural location, where the number of providers is limited.
Helping the system structure activities to meet child care schedules or facilitate access to child care	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD) concluded that their greatest need was after-hours child care based on completing the SWFI child care worksheet and their ongoing discussions with participants about child care availability. Several child care providers indicate in the state database that they provide after-hours care, but in actuality they do not. ABCD convened a group of eight local child care providers to discuss this issue in the community.	As a result of this convening of local providers, and other ongoing discussions with providers, ABCD is able to connect participants to care during evenings and weekends. They have developed an accurate, up-to-date database of child care providers and their hours.
Helping the system structure activities to meet child care schedules or facilitate access to child care	Moore Community House	Moore Community House’s grant from the state TANF agency has provided more in-roads into working with the TANF agency, in addition to permitting Moore Community House to pay for all participants’ child care during and after training. Moore Community House has been helping the TANF agency figure out how to meet the required state match to receive full child care dollars.	Moore Community House has been working to build systems and is helping the TANF agency to address gaps in child care spending.



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Information and referrals to help find care	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida team (OIC) wants to ensure SWFI graduates have access to child care once they enter employment, so they are encouraging participants to sign up for child care subsidies while they are in training, rather than waiting until they complete their training. By signing up early, the participants are able to get on the subsidy waiting list earlier and may receive their subsidy more quickly when their training is completed.	In process.
Information and referrals to help find care	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace has added more child care content to its Foundational Skills Workshop Week. The Child Care Concierge hosts information sessions during the Workshop Week, addressing concerns, misconceptions, questions, and barriers about child care for incoming participants before individualized assistance and training starts.	In process.
<b>Employment activities</b>			
Employer partnerships	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation presented and discussed on the job training (OJT) opportunities at a quarterly Employer Advisory Committee meeting. They have also begun monthly strategic meetings with the Workforce Investment Network to identify OJT opportunities.	In process.
Employer partnerships	Moore Community House	Moore Community House partnered with Mississippi Power to recruit female linemen. Mississippi Power had never hired female linemen and wants to specifically recruit women. The linemen training program pays \$18 an hour and provides on-the-job training, with potential for much higher wages after training.	In April 2018, 10 SWFI graduates were invited to test into the Mississippi Power linemen program.



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Employer partnerships	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College uses an innovative approach to partner with employers to serve their incumbent workers. The employers must agree with the program philosophy and commit to SWFI. Vermont Technical College requires these employers to take an active role by interviewing SWFI participants and participating in classes.	Vermont Technical College serves a large number of incumbent workers and has engaged local employers. Requiring employers to take an active role has led to improved employer engagement.
<b>Program design</b>			
Co-locating services	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network (Pacific Gateway) is working with a community partner to develop a survey to determine the training needs of parents whose children are in afterschool programs in a target district. They then want to provide training on site at the afterschool program.	In process.
<b>Program practices and approach</b>			
Coaching	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.	ABCD has partnered with LinkedIn's Social Impact Department, LinkedIn for Good, which provides a career coach-led workshop. The curriculum for this workshop was created by LinkedIn. It aims to show people the purpose of LinkedIn as a networking tool and job search engine. The coach delivered LinkedIn's Community Coaching Curriculum (a three-hour workshop) to Banking and Finance students.	In process.
Online platforms and tools	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace is developing a digital learning platform for Android/iOS. After enrollment, participants will use the app for career readiness modules (and to improve their digital literacy). It will provide additional information about the health care field and career pathways.	In process.



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Outreach and recruitment	Community College of Aurora	Community College of Aurora staff engaged in a process flow exercise to understand how students moved through services. The exercise led to the creation of regular intake sessions called Interest Cafés. All prospective students are now directed to the Interest Cafés. RSVP forms help determine initial eligibility. During the café, attendees learn about program services, apply for the program, and receive detailed instructions about next steps. In cases where students are not eligible for SWFI services, referral and resource information is provided.	28 students have participated in Interest Cafés.
Outreach and recruitment	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation is developing a new recruiting-focused partnership with a community center for adults completing their high school education. The SWFI career navigator has been conducting regular information sessions to promote SWFI-funded trainings.	The information sessions have been well attended, and Memphis Bioworks Foundation hopes to maintain and develop this new partnership.
Outreach and recruitment	Moore Community House	Moore Community House has created a new media strategy to boost outreach and recruitment. They started a new Facebook social media campaign that has been viewed over 10,000 times. They have also done spots on local television channels, put ads in local newspapers, and are exploring placing billboard ads.	Moore Community House has conducted an analysis of its new media strategy and found that most people hear about the program through social media or word of mouth.
Outreach and recruitment	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC staff are recruiting parents who are enrolled in IT programs at one of their training partners. The training partner collects participants' information and then a SWFI staff person goes to the site to enroll participants every two weeks.	Recruiting on site at their training partner has been an effective recruitment strategy, helping them to consistently reach their monthly recruitment goals.
Outreach and recruitment	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center is revising its outreach and recruitment materials to better reflect their target population based on the Advanced Manufacturing expert call. They are working on a cheat sheet for participants that will show earning potential after training in the targeted industries.	In process.



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Outreach and recruitment and co-locating services	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center has increased its presence at many of its partner training programs. The training programs have provided SWFI staff an office for a couple of hours a week and they go every week. SWFI staff also attend college information sessions twice a month. More than recruiting participants, their onsite presence has increased training partner staff's awareness of the SWFI program.	Rochester Rehabilitation Center noted that they are receiving more referrals from staff where they are co-located.
<b>Training or education</b>			
Career pathways	The Workplace	The WorkPlace began a health care-focused job club to promote networking and longer-term learning among participants, graduates, and employers.	In process.
Credentialing	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix SWFI staff compiled online study resources and simulations available through the public library and Skills Commons because many of City of Phoenix's participants expressed that they did not feel prepared for the certification exam after completion of the A+ course. In addition, SWFI provided preparation books.	Eight participants are currently preparing for their A+ certification exam.
Credentialing	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC encouraged their A+/N+ training partner to make practice exams part of the coursework to understand whether participants are ready for the exams or not. Previously, some participants were not passing the exam.	The training partner has a better idea of whether participants need additional support in order to pass the exam.
Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	As described in the April to December 2017 Bright Ideas brief ( <a href="https://h1bswfi.workforceqps.org/resources/2018/02/15/16/24/Bright-Ideas-Tip-Sheet">https://h1bswfi.workforceqps.org/resources/2018/02/15/16/24/Bright-Ideas-Tip-Sheet</a> ), Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource (CareerSource) developed a cycle of four week-long Microsoft trainings that SWFI participants can join at any time. Participants attend the college for three days per week to receive Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and QuickBooks credentials and attend the grantee site for two days to participate in a "job club" program of resume writing workshops, job searching skills, and interviewing skills development.	As of January 2018, at least 17 participants received Microsoft credentials, and 12 participants entered employed.



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Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource has developed a four-week entry-level entrepreneurial training, "Own your Future," which aims to help participants develop an entrepreneurial mindset (e.g., recognizing opportunities, having confidence, knowing how to brand themselves, being comfortable with failure). As part of the program, CareerSource had a county commissioner come to talk to participants about reentry because some participants were formerly incarcerated. CareerSource will conduct an evaluation of this program.	In the first cycle, 21 of 30 participants completed "Own your Future" and received a credential.
Short-term intensive training	OAI, Inc.	OAI developed and implemented a foundational skills workshop. This was a mandatory 2-day workshop that covered assessments, education and training options, career planning, and individualized services. During the 2-day period, the program manager, systems navigator, career coach, and business account executives had an opportunity to spend time with each participant and assist them with navigating the systems of education, career training, employment, child care, transportation and other support services.	The first foundational skills workshop took place in January 2018, and 16 participants attended.
Upskilling incumbent worker training	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC is going to offer IT training courses to incumbent workers at the Seminole tribe headquarters. The tribe prefers to offer services on site so they are hiring adjuncts to teach IT courses, including Microsoft Office and A+/N+. They will hire a Seminole tribe member as a liaison.	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.