



SWFI Bright Ideas: October 2019 – December 2019

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between October 2019 and December 2019. Earlier Bright Ideas briefs, listed on the next page, explore practices between June 2016 and September 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, the SWFI TA team reviews 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:

- **Sustainability and integration of child care and workforce systems**, which relates to how grantees are preparing to sustain their program and make lasting changes to child care and workforce systems in their communities.
- **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 and education**, which relates to the training and educational services grantees offer SWFI participants, such as how they are developing career pathways to middle- and high-skilled employment.

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 with any outputs or outcomes if the approaches are new).



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More detailed Promising Practices briefs, released separately and less often, 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: August 2019 to September 2019. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2020/01/15/19/18/SWFI_Bright_Ideas_Brief_-_August_2019_-_September_2019
- 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



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Table 1. Bright Ideas for the period October 2019 – December 2019

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Sustainability and systems integration			
Sustainability	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (now Total Action for Progress; TAP)	Total Action for Progress (TAP) is developing a relationship with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond to continue some of their two-generation work after SWFI. They are discussing ways for the Richmond Fed to become more involved in rural communities and support capacity building at TAP and in the region. TAP recently invited a successful SWFI participant to a meeting with the Richmond Fed to share her experience with the program, which TAP featured on their social media.	In progress
Child care			
Information and referrals to help find care	City of Long Beach, Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network (Pacific Gateway) has 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 with children’s chairs, tables, and educational activities/games and are providing a child care resource guide in the waiting room. They encourage parents to bring their children between the time frame of 3pm-5pm to provide them with an opportunity to connect with their Career Specialist at a later time.	In progress
Structuring work activities to meet child care schedules or facilitate access to child care	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has been prioritizing accessibility to childcare when identifying new training providers, including one provider with on-site child care. Now that one of their training providers has child care on-site, they are having open conversations with their other training providers about the benefits of on-site child care.	In progress



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Employment activities			
Employer partnerships	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) has been successful in placing participants in IT-related employment. Even though positions are often entry-level, participants are entering positions such as reception, customer service, and data entry at technology companies. CareerSource NCFL has been successful in placing customers in these roles because they have strong relationships with technology companies that were part of local technology incubators. These companies took advantage of another CareerSource grant that fostered technology incubators by paying the wages of their staff while the companies were getting started.	As of September 2019, 100 percent of participants who have entered employment have entered training-related employment.
Employer partnerships	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix's business solutions specialist (BSS) invites SWFI participants to attend meetings with local business network groups to practice their networking skills and build connections with potential employers.	In progress
Employer partnerships	Rochester Rehabilitation Center (RRC)	Rochester Rehabilitation Center (RRC) hosted a community breakfast that brought together 150 people from the community including SWFI participants, employers, Chamber of Commerce, training providers, and local officials. The SWFI team gave an update of their activities and shared information about how to connect with the program.	SWFI staff reported an increase in interested employers contacting the SWFI program
Employer partnerships; Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	As described in the August 2019 to September 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 participant needs to gain a credential quickly and begin work.	The grantee continues to see more interest in these classes with 9 students in a CNC/SolidWorks class and 5 students in a welding class.



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Program design			
Building regular communication across programs	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has continued to improve collaboration with Head Start in their community, including a commitment to leverage funds. SWFI will cover training and supportive services if Head Start handles their childcare needs; if something happens to a family's Head Start eligibility or access, SWFI will step in to provide child care.	In progress
Targeted industries/occupations	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	As described in the August 2019 to September 2019 Bright Ideas brief , Memphis Bioworks is partnering with the Memphis Medical District Collaborative (MMDC), an organization concentrating on job opportunities for residents of the Memphis Medical District. The MMDC, which is made up of representatives from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Regional One Health, Southern College of Optometry, LeBonheur Children's Hospital, and area training providers, including the University of Memphis and Southwest Tennessee Community College, participated in a July 2019 meeting at Memphis Bioworks. Human resources staff participate in this collaborative to align their hiring systems in order to give preference to participants living in the targeted Memphis zip codes.	Through this partnership, the Collaborative has adopted the pre-training advising tool, Hire Select; this tool helps participants learn more about soft skills. The meeting served as a great opportunity for networking to establish and build relationships.
Program practices and approach			
Building relationships	OAI, Inc.	OAI 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 helped strengthen partner relationships and resulted in one new participant and OAI expects additional participants. OAI considers the event so successful that they are making it an annual event.



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Coaching	The WorkPlace	<p>The WorkPlace now introduces their participants to their 3-person case management team when they receive their acceptance email, rather than handing off participants to a new staff person as they progress through the program. From the first day, participants know their assigned 1) Eligibility and Enrollment Specialist, 2) Career Counselor, and 3) Employment Specialist. This earlier contact with Employment Specialists aims to build trust and rapport with participants.</p>	<p>The SWFI program manager believes the early introduction of the employment specialist helps retention and outcomes data collection, with more participants contacting their employment specialist to tell them they found a job.</p>
Coaching	The WorkPlace	<p>As described in the October 2018 to January 2019 Bright Ideas brief, the WorkPlace began working with Brandeis University to incorporate career-based goal setting (“career mapping”) into their Foundations Week and at different points in a participant’s engagement with SWFI. Working with Brandeis revealed that Foundations Week should include concrete steps for participants as they navigate a new career. Foundations Week now includes a workshop, <i>Navigating Your Healthcare Career</i>, where participants choose a goal job and workplace and make a plan for micro-advancements toward that goal and overcoming barriers. Throughout a participants’ engagement with SWFI, they have access to additional workshops to continue their career mapping such as <i>Starting a New Job</i>, <i>Making Your Employer Work for You</i>, and <i>The Better Job Workshop</i>. Depending on the activity, the WorkPlace notifies those waiting to begin training, currently in training, and/or recently completed training and ready for their employment search.</p>	<p>SWFI staff feel that well-documented career mapping has improved the hand-off of participants from Career Counselors who guide them through the program to Employment Specialists who focus on job placement</p>



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Co-enrollment	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace leverages their existing HPOG grant to build on the supportive services available to their participants under SWFI. The SWFI program manager estimates that one-third to one-half of their SWFI participants are co-enrolled in HPOG; HPOG has different income requirements and only SWFI participants who meet HPOG's income requirements and are randomly assigned to HPOG are enrolled. While participants are co-enrolled, supportive services are split between both grants so that more participants can be served. HPOG builds upon the SWFI childcare concierge services with free tablets, access to online learning, access to WiFi for a year upon graduation, HPOG advisors at the local community colleges, and contextualized learning in healthcare (e.g. remedial math taught in a healthcare context).	In progress
Outreach and recruitment	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix uses social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to advertise their SWFI program and recruit family-based populations that use mobile phones and tablets daily.	In progress
Online platforms and tools	Community College of Aurora (CCA)	Community College of Aurora (CCA)'s two online student portals, D2L (where students can take online courses) and NaviGate (which helps students enroll in and manage their classes), have been integrated and equipped with texting capabilities. CCA staff can now connect with students via texting, which has increased the frequency of communication between Achievement Coaches and students. Achievement coaches use the texting capabilities to reach out to students, encourage attendance for trainings, and connect students with supportive services like tutors.	According to CCA, the number of students accessing supportive services and attending class has increased.



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Training and education			
Adapting curricula to provide education and training	Community College of Aurora (CCA)	CCA has developed soft-skills workshops through its online portal. The workshops combine online-learning and in-class learning and will cover the following topics: Emotional Intelligence, Problem Solving that is specific to the individual, Time Management skills, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership Styles, and Communication Skills. CCA staff hope to add financial planning to the workshops to reduce the “cliff effect,” where participants risk losing a large amount of their benefits after they begin to earn a salary, but they do not earn enough to cover their current expenses that the benefits supported.	In progress
Credentialing	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has worked with their training providers to add stackable credentials in healthcare and IT to attract more participants and make them more competitive in the job market. Participants training to be a certified nursing assistant (CNA) now have the option to add EKG and phlebotomy credentials to their CNA certificate. Participants working toward entry-level IT certificates can now choose between CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ for an additional credential.	The SWFI team reports increased enrollments in their CNA and IT training programs after implementing stackable credentials
Short-term intensive training	Moore Community House	As described in the August 2019 to September 2019 Bright Ideas brief , Moore Community House has developed a shorter term training program called Trades 101. During this two-week class, participants receive OSHA 10 and forklift safety certificates. In addition, participants receive priority to attend the longer-term training class or boot camp.	Moore Community House reported that they have seen increased interest in the shorter-term classes and that participants are able to enter the labor market faster with this training.
Training providers	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has implemented a strict performance-based cutoff in identifying new training providers. The SWFI program manager will not authorize the use of a training provider from the ETP list whose performance metrics indicate that less than 75% of their participants complete their program.	In progress



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Work-based learning	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (now Total Action for Progress; TAP)	TAP's trainers for their certified medical assistant (CMA) class have taken the initiative to build relationships with local hospitals and clinics to negotiate externship opportunities for participants who do not have prior experience in healthcare.	The program manager has seen success in both the CMA and CNA participants interviewing successfully after externships and moving on to unsubsidized employment.
Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	As described in the August 2019 to September 2019 Bright Ideas brief , 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.	The first class will start in January 2020 and had 8 students registered as of December 2019.

* 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.