



SWFI Bright Ideas: April 2017 – December 2017

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between April 2017 and December 2017. An earlier Bright Ideas brief explores practices between June 2016 and March 2017.¹ These Bright Ideas 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.²
- **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.

¹ SWFI Bright Ideas: June 2016 to March 2017. Available at:

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

² This Bright Ideas brief does not include child care because a recent brief described each grantee's approach to meeting SWFI participants' child care needs. Available at: <https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/12/07/14/17/Child-Care-Promising-Practices-Brief>.



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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.



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Table 1. Bright Ideas for the period April 2017–December 2017

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcome*
Employment activities			
Employer partnerships	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource (CareerSource) has a business services unit with three individuals focused on on-the-job-training (OJT). The business services team has identified more than 50 information technology (IT) related companies participating in other CareerSource programs that they have engaged as employer partners to provide work-based training opportunities for SWFI participants. CareerSource is developing a web-based portal to serve as a central hub for document uploads and communication between staff and employer partners.	In process.
Employer partnerships	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation presented and discussed 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 has begun targeting larger employers who are willing to hire 10 or more SWFI participants at a time because more participants are graduating. This helps Moore Community House place a larger number of SWFI participants into employment and enables them to provide support for the employer and more easily maintain contact with SWFI graduates.	In process.



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Program design			
Building regular communication across programs	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network (Pacific Gateway) is going to co-enroll participants with WIOA Adult so the participants have a WIOA Career Specialist assigned to them. This will help integrate SWFI into the organization so it is part of the usual workflow.	In process.
Building regular communication across programs	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation holds monthly phone check ins with all partners, and also has instituted quarterly face-to-face gatherings. This provides an opportunity for discussions of goals and progress among partners (particularly focused on recruitment), and is also designed to provide training and capacity building for partners. For example, a child care partner presented information and trained partners on the process for making childcare referrals, their services for parents with children in specific age groups, and locations for parental support and training. In another meeting, Memphis Bioworks Foundation conducted "train the trainer" modules in essential skills training for the SWFI grant partners. Partners were trained to become facilitators, so that they will train their staff and reinforce the training that SWFI participants undergo.	Trainings received high feedback ratings, and they strengthened bonds between grant partners and Memphis Bioworks Foundation staff.
Orientation	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (TAP Roanoke) continues to adjust orientation to the needs of each participant cohort, including conducting intensive orientations during the hours that children are in Head Start, or other scheduling tied to specific target groups. TAP Roanoke customizes orientation content, and encourages the participant cohort to carpool and develop peer support.	In process.



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Sustainability	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	TAP Roanoke has begun thinking about systems change and sustainability planning by engaging with workforce systems to emphasize the value of childcare and behavioral health. Staff believe that workforce support systems are better funded and ripe for change in how they incorporate supportive services.	In process.
Targeted industries/occupations	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	The OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida team (OIC) has started a partnership with the South Florida Manufacturer's Association, which includes 8,000 manufacturers across 8 counties, to recruit incumbent workers and find employment placements.	In process.
Program practices and approach			
Covering the cost of supportive services	OAI, Inc.	OAI, Inc. now confirms that all eligible participants are receiving SNAP and TANF benefits.	This leverages additional funds.
Online platforms and tools	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation adapted a customer relationship management software so that all participating agencies can enter information and see case notes on shared clients. This approach is intended to facilitate and streamline communication across partners so that different record-keeping systems do not present a barrier to partner collaboration when serving clients.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.	Action for Boston Community Development made a new connection with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity Human Resources Division. She conducted an information and recruitment session for SWFI participants interested in applying for various state jobs with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.	Approximately two dozen participants attended the recruitment session.



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Outreach and recruitment	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC's SWFI team members are each dedicating one day per week to recruitment. Staff have received lists of potential SWFI participants, including TANF-recipients and young parents in the Public School District. Staff will call all these participants to tell them about SWFI and invite them to an orientation. Staff are also recruiting in child care centers and schools in zip codes with demographic characteristics that suggest there may be potential SWFI participants.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center SWFI team has developed recruitment and outreach materials that use plain language to attract more participants to advanced manufacturing.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center has worked on establishing a public presence at various informational sessions, job fairs, and community events. For example, they hosted a "Women on the Move" recruitment event at an affordable housing building that connected potential participants with SWFI staff, the community college, and prospective employers. Due to the influx of interest in the program, orientation days were held twice monthly this quarter to provide individuals with program information and to assess their SWFI eligibility.	This presence has created an increase in the number of individuals interested in SWFI and staff have conducted an estimated 350 SWFI-readiness screenings of potential participants. Fifty people attended the "Women on the Move" recruitment event, and seven people scheduled intake appointments.
Outreach and recruitment	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College has worked with its partner network to disseminate information about SWFI. It has participated in advanced manufacturing forums, given interviews with newspapers, and connected with the state Department of Children and Families to post advertisements.	In process.



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Retention	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix SWFI staff planned and carried out a Motivational Retreat, based on feedback from SWFI case management staff regarding the challenges participants are facing when juggling work, family, and training. The intent of the motivational retreat was to bring the participants together in a supportive environment. The event consisted of several guest speakers who presented on topics focused on financial literacy, self-motivation, career development, and dealing with naysayers.	Participants valued getting to know their fellow participants better.
Retention	Community College of Aurora	Community College of Aurora realized that retention of participants was a problem when there is a lag between enrollment in the program and engagement in classes/trainings due to semester-based scheduling. To maintain participant engagement, they created a mid-semester cohort and have held engagement workshops every other week between enrollment and start of classes.	In process.
Training or education			
Adapting curricula to provide education and training	OAI, Inc.	OAI, Inc. has created a foundational skills workshop, which will precede participants' entrance into training. The workshop will include life skills and soft skills, as well as a more thorough introduction to the mission of the program.	The first foundational skills workshop will take place in January, and about 16 participants are expected.
Career pathways	Moore Community House	Moore Community House is partnering with local employers and community colleges to create a career pathway that moves participants toward a more advanced credential such as welding.	In process.



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Career pathways	OAI, Inc.	OAI, Inc. has been thinking creatively about how to frame manufacturing. Chicago has a history of heavy manufacturing, but a lot of today's jobs are actually about logistics, transportation, and lighter manufacturing. OAI has held events for out of school youth to focus on robotics as a demonstration of modern manufacturing.	In process.
Career pathways	The Workplace	The WorkPlace redesigned their Career Counseling practices to build upon the information distributed in their Foundation Skills Workshop Week in an effort to expand participants' exposure to other occupations. As part of program materials, participants are given: a Career Exploration Worksheet; a four page document with the various healthcare professions, including the average salaries in the Fairfield region; and the opportunity to work with the Career Counselors to see other program options that they may not have considered.	Although the process is new, staff at The WorkPlace report more participants are excited for the knowledge of other training options and career paths in the healthcare field. Staff hope this will translate into more participants coming back for advanced training in the healthcare industry.
Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource has developed week-long introductory computer courses with one of their training partners to expose students who have little college experience to college. 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. These programs are offered every month, and participants can join at any time, so participants do not have to wait to begin training. SWFI staff describe that "these classes are the entry point for the participants to obtain increased skills training preparing them for high-skill information technology occupations."	The grantee believes this model is working well. At least 10 participants have received credentials. Three participants have continued into higher skilled IT-training and three entered employment immediately.



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Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource is in the process of developing a 6- to 8-week technology-focused entrepreneurial program that provides information about how businesses grow and succeed and business mentoring for SWFI participants. This program will also act as a job skills training and provide participants with a perspective on what it is like to be an employer. CareerSource will conduct an evaluation of this program.	In process.
Short-term intensive training	Moore Community House	Moore Community House graduated its first night class, which allowed participants who work during the day or have other commitments to attend classes.	35 SWFI participants started the class and 28 participants graduated on October 6, 2017.
Short-term intensive training	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center is exploring short-term basic IT training with the Educational Opportunity Center for its low-skilled SWFI participants. These trainings would provide entry-level IT opportunities.	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.