SWFI Bright Ideas: October 2018 – January 2019

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between October 2018 and January 2019. 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 September 2018.[1] In addition, a Promising Practices brief discusses grantees' approaches to child care.[2] 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 and progressing towards systems integration.

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[1] SWFI Bright Ideas: June 2016 to March 2017. Available at: 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; 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: May 2018 and June 2018. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/08/17/16/09/SWFI-Bright-Ideas-Brief-June-2018; 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

[2] SWFI Child Care Promising Practices Brief. Available at: https://h1bswfi.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/12/07/14/17/Child-Care-Promising-Practices-Brief.

- **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.

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 October 2018–January 2019

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Child care			
Helping parents access affordable child care/early education	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace built a web-based database of 140 local child care providers complete with geographic search capabilities that allow participants to identify child care providers within a certain radius of their home and/or training site. They provide their clients with an introduction to the site so they are empowered to navigate the website and reach out to providers on their own. The grantee is partnering with All Our Kin, a network that supports family child care providers, to potentially include quality ratings for child care providers on the website.	Created a web-based database of 140 local child care providers.
Employment activities			
Employer engagement	OAI, Inc.	OAI is developing a "speed dating" session to add to its regular signature hiring event. The speed dating session would pair employers and job seekers for a fast paced meeting. Successful meetings will result in a second interview for the job seeker.	In process.
Employer engagement	OAI, Inc.	OAI staff meet with employers monthly. They are using a new model to engage employers in these meetings. They structure these meetings so that they are employer-led conversations with staff from SWFI and other organizations listening in to hear about employers' needs and what they are looking for in employees. Based on this, OAI has made changes to its education and training courses to include the soft skills employers consider important.	In process.
Employer engagement	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida (OIC) is working to help participants enter jobs in IT, which is challenging because many employers require that participants have relevant work experience. OIC has joined an IT industry association and is trying to build relationships with IT-focused companies. They have found that employers with only a few IT-related positions typically require more experience than IT-focused companies so they are trying to focus on engaging IT-focused employers.	In process.

![Strengthening Working Families Initiative logo]

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Employer engagement	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.'s Employer Relations Manager worked with the Business Solutions Unit to host a job fair for Volvo. TAP assisted job seekers in completing a paper informational questionnaire, online job application, in-person interview, and drug screening.	Connected over 1,000 job seekers with a local employer.
Meeting employer needs	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix's business solutions specialist conducts a "needs assessment," a structured conversation with specific questions, to find out exactly what the employer is looking for in its hiring process when meeting with employers. This helps the City of Phoenix provide appropriate job candidates to that employer.	In process.
Meeting employer needs	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix has partnered with some of their training providers and employers to begin providing training in employer-specific cohorts. For each training cohort, an employer commits to hiring SWFI participants who have successfully completed the training and credentialing. This means that the training can be tailored to the employer's specific needs.	In process.
On-the-Job Training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	As described in the July to September 2018 Bright Ideas brief, Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource (CareerSource) has eight On-the-Job Training (OJT) sites underway. They have developed an online Earn-and-Learn work-based learning portal for staff and employers to manage OJT documentation. They are exploring options to sell this portal to other agencies to help fund OJT after the SWFI grant ends.	The portal is live and they expect it to help facilitate smoother management of OJT documentation.
On-the-Job Training	Community College of Aurora	Community College of Aurora (CCA) has recently partnered with the Colorado Innovative Industries Internship program, which funds interns to work at least 130 on-the-job hours for employers across six months. This partnership will help participants access work based learning and employment.	In process.

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Program design			
Co-locating services	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource are exploring offering their "Own Your Future" entrepreneurship course on-site through a partnership with the Housing Authority. This will help address barriers to participation among a hard to reach population.	In process.
Program practices and approach			
Covering cost of supportive services	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource has identified a number of community partnerships to support their customers, including SWFI participants. They have a partnership with the Department of Corrections to host a case manager onsite at CareerSource to help previously incarcerated individuals feel more comfortable receiving employment services. They have also developed some non-traditional partnerships including with a hair cutting studio that will cut participants' hair for free to help them prepare for job interviews.	In process.
Covering cost of supportive services	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College has partnered with Ready to Go, which provides rides to and from employment and child care, to provide transportation to students. Addressing transportation will help address a substantial barrier for rural students, many of whom live in towns with limited or no public transportation or taxi services.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	City of Long Beach	Pacific Gateway has contracted with Centro C.H.A., a community provider that will be responsible for recruiting many participants. They will benefit from the strong links of Centro C.H.A. with the community.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC's communications and marketing department has developed monthly newsletters and success stories to send to community partners to keep them engaged and encourage them to continue sending referrals.	In process.

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Outreach and recruitment	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation SWFI staff participated in events with Porter Leath, a Head Start provider. These events presented an opportunity for SWFI staff to connect with Porter Leath Family Connectors and Case Managers. Through this connection, the SWFI Program Manager and the SWFI Coordinator attended a "Lunch and Learn" for parents hosted by one of the large centers. The SWFI Program Manager and SWFI Coordinator presented information about the program and job information to parents. The SWFI program's recruiting partner is working on scheduling more "Lunch and Learns" to reach more parents and potentially identify some that are eligible for SWFI.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	TAP's SwiftStart team worked with their marketing department to create an informational video about their program, which features three SwiftStart graduates and their families. The grantee plans to promote this video on social media and at the local workforce board to increase program awareness and interest. Although their target population remains Head Start parents, they believe this video may reach additional untapped audiences such as clients with children who enter the Workforce One Stop Centers.	In process.
Outreach and recruitment	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	TAP has embedded career mentors within a Head Start program at one site and connected their 2-gen coordinators with Head Start family development specialists in another. Their local Head Start programs have been effusive about how helpful it is to have SWFI available as a resource for their parents.	TAP continually receives strong referrals from families already enrolled in Head Start and has been successful in getting TAP clients into Head Start.
Outreach and recruitment	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace began coordinating with training providers to present the SWFI program on-site at the providers' facilities, which generated a new pool of candidates looking to advance in the healthcare industry.	In process.
Retention	Community College of Aurora	As described in the July to September Bright Ideas brief, CCA hosted a two-generation meet-up for SWFI participants that focused on family engagement in life-long learning. At the conclusion of the meetup, families were invited to accompany staff to Denver Art Museum's free event for Colorado residents, First Saturday.	Six families attended (8 adults and 7 children).

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Retention	Community College of Aurora	CCA implemented a new process to help participants enroll in classes. There are limited enrollment spaces for certified nursing assistant and phlebotomy courses at CCA. Because the courses are prerequisites for nursing degrees, it was very competitive to enroll in these courses. CCA found that only a few students were successful in enrolling in these courses per semester. For students who were unable to enroll, CCA had to maintain engagement for another semester before the student could try to enroll again. This was a challenge to retention. To help more students access these courses, CCA implemented a process where SWFI Achievement Coaches could register students for the classes. Students signed an agreement and completed forms giving the Achievement Coaches permission to enroll in the class on their behalf as soon as enrollment opened.	In process. CCA is currently using the cohort model in a new accelerated IT support program.
Retention	Community College of Aurora	CCA is using degree plans to help students map out the steps involved to complete the program, called a heat map. These maps help students understand the courses they are required to take, the order they take the courses in, and the expected timeline for completion. The maps also help CCA staff anticipate how many students in a cohort may need a course in a given semester to avoid the cancellation of a course (courses require the enrollment of a minimum of 10 students). CCA staff use the maps to quickly identify courses that may be cancelled that staff will need to find a substitute for.	In process.
Retention	The WorkPlace	The WorkPlace designed the "Foundations Workshop Week" for participants to enroll in prior to Occupational Skills Training. This week of purposeful workshops encompasses both personal and professional development topics, with written career planning handouts that participants complete throughout the week. By the end of the week, participants have written documentation of their work styles, their goals, and criteria for Career Counselors to use to match them with healthcare occupations and Occupational Skills Training that SWFI offers.	Staff believe this has decreased individual career advising time, increased healthcare training enrollments, reduced the dropout rate, and diversified the Occupational Skills Training tracks accessed.
Staff training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource closes their career center for two hours each week to provide training to case management staff. They think this training is very beneficial for their performance. During those two hours, they were conducting field trips to community partners to educate their staff on the available resources in the community. Recently, staff used that time to complete a training from the county about how to talk about mental health with participants.	In process.

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Online platforms and tools	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	CareerSource is providing access to virtual case managers 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week. Participants can check in with a case manager via phone, email, or text. Case notes are then passed to their usual case manager to keep them updated.	In process.
Training or education			
Apprenticeships	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix SWFI staff are working in conjunction with the Arizona Apprenticeship Programs Office to create apprenticeship opportunities in the healthcare field to address job placement challenges faced by SWFI participants after completing their training. Phoenix also hopes to create apprenticeships in IT to provide participants with more experience to make them more competitive job candidates.	In process.
Career pathways	Moore Community House	Moore Community House participated in a systems-level webinar hosted by the National Skills Coalition. Along with the Mississippi Child Care Initiative, Moore Community House described how providing child care in its program has helped build the workforce. Participants in the webinar also discussed the state systems-level supports necessary, such as funding streams and key stakeholder involvement, to create more programs like Moore Community House. As described in the July to September Bright Ideas brief, Moore Community House was also recently highlighted in a brief by the National Skills Coalition for their work on apprenticeship and career pathways. Moore also hosted the Women's Bureau for a site visit to share information about their apprenticeship program and how it increases opportunities for women. The information shared with the Women's Bureau will be featured in a case study.	The brief is available here.
Career pathways	The Workplace	The WorkPlace is currently working in partnership with the Institute on Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University on The Workplace's Health Profession Opportunity Grants University Partnership (HPOG-UP) Project to develop a career advancement and career mapping curriculum that will enhance the WorkPlace's current series of workshops in the healthcare field.	In process.

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Credentialing	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix Business Solutions Specialists meet with each participant to discuss progress and provide information on study methods, exam preparation, and study schedules to help participants complete their A+ certification exam. As described in the July to September Bright Ideas brief, SWFI staff developed an exam preparation bootcamp to help participants complete their A+ certification exam. As described in the May to June 2018 Bright Ideas brief, City of Phoenix also compiled a list of resources for participants to use to study for the A+ certification test.	In process.
Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	As described in the last Bright Ideas briefs, CareerSource has developed a cycle of four week-long Microsoft trainings that are available to participants and a four-week entry-level entrepreneurial training, "Own Your Future," which aims to help participants develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Staff believe the focus on soft skills in "Own Your Future" is helping participants stay engaged in the training and retain employment. In addition, the Microsoft trainings provide a relatively quick sense of accomplishment and exposure to the community college without participants having to go through complex registration processes.	This model continues to meet participants' needs. As of March 2019, across the Microsoft and Own Your Future trainings, 115 participants had received a credential.
Short-term intensive training	OAI, Inc.	As described in the January to April 2018 Bright Ideas brief, OAI developed and implemented a mandatory 2-day foundational skills workshop that covered assessments, education and training options, career planning, individualized services, and health and wellness. The next foundational skills workshop will also include an Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification.	The first foundational skills workshop took place in January 2018, and 16 participants attended. OAI has now had 42 additional participants attend the workshop. All participants who have undergone the foundational skills workshop are still participating in SWFI.
Short-term intensive training	Moore Community House	Moore Community House has implemented its second night class. This class is taught exclusively in Spanish. Child care is provided at the Head Start center across the street from the training facility. Moore Community House had great interest in a Spanish language class from the community and local employers. One local employer is working with the grantee to transition SWFI participants once they complete training into a Shipfitter Bootcamp; after completion of the bootcamp, participants are offered jobs with the employers.	Increased maximum enrollment in the Spanish night class to 35 from 20 due to community interest.

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Working with institutions of higher education	Moore Community House	As described in the May to June 2018 Bright Ideas brief, Moore Community House is partnering with local community colleges to provide training for more women. The grantee provides an on-site coach at the community college to help with case management and support services for SWFI participants who are being trained at the community colleges.	Moore Community House has helped eight women enroll in certification programs that will further them along a career pathway (welding, auto mechanics, and process technology). Two women have received advanced credentials as part of their participation in this program.
Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College is working with the Community College of Vermont on expanding opportunities for participants to move along a career pathway. Students and employers have expressed interest in welding (coupled with AWS certification) and a CNC operator course (paired with NIMS certification).	In process.
Working with institutions of higher education	Vermont Technical College	Vermont Technical College has begun offering SWFI participants open enrollment in a Certified Production Technician training along with non-SWFI participants. Previously, this was only offered as a workshop class for SWFI participants specifically. This will also lower the likelihood of class cancellation due to low enrollment.	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.