



SWFI Bright Ideas: May 2018 – June 2018

This brief presents Bright Ideas that Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grantees have been using to deliver program and system services between May 2018 and June 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 April 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.
- **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.

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

² 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

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.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Table 1. Bright Ideas for the period May 2018–June 2018

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Child care			
Helping parents access affordable child care/early education	OAI, Inc.	OAI, Inc. has SWFI staff work with Illinois Action for Children to enroll participants in child care subsidies. This has reduced child care costs for the program, reduced wait times for participants to receive child care assistance, and increased the number of families with access to long-term child care assistance.	As of summer 2018, 172 children of 107 SWFI participants have received child care through SWFI, with much of this funding coming from leveraged child care subsidy funds.
Employment activities			
Career Pathways	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida (OIC) is working to address participants' limited work experience, which is a barrier to obtaining middle-/high-skilled employment. They have placed a small number of participants into help desk jobs, which is an entry-level IT job that can help participants gain work experience. They are also beginning to work on identifying on-the-job (OJT) experiences for participants.	In process.
Program design			
Building regular communication across programs and co-locating services	Moore Community House	Moore Community House is partnering with the local American Job Center (AJC) to have an on-site full-time presence at the AJC. The staff person will work with all the programs co-located at the AJC to help job seekers find child care and explore training opportunities through SWFI. The staff person will serve as a systems navigator to help programs understand child care. In addition, they will continue to conduct information sessions about their program at the AJC.	In process. The full-time staff person started at the AJC on July 1, 2018.
Building regular communication across programs	Rochester Rehabilitation Center	Rochester Rehabilitation Center has a systems change subcontractor that has created several systems change tools and resources to document which organizations are providing what resources, where there are gaps, and where resources are overlapping. These tools include: a SWFI Systems Level Activities Fact Sheet; a Mapping Project for SWFI Systems Level Activities; and a Current State of Things Project for SWFI Systems Level Activities. The grantee has presented these resources to various committees in the area and plans to follow-up with partners to gather feedback from the community.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Sustainability planning	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc. (TAP Roanoke) is participating in the OnRamp project with the local United Way. The purpose of OnRamp is to enhance the performance of the workforce system to improve training and employment outcomes for families in poverty. To help more families successfully utilize the workforce system, the partnership will 1) institute focused governance and collaborative bodies to improve policies and practices to better serve the target population, 2) institute a coordinated referral system to improve access to workforce and supportive services, 3) enhance system navigation among a large group of partners, and 4) increase utilization of supportive services needed to ensure that the target population is successful in achieving training/employment outcomes.	United Way is funding staff time for greater systems coordination. TAP Roanoke, Virginia Blue Ridge Works (VBR Works), and Roanoke County Department of Social Services will be the lead partners.
Program practices and approach			
Case management	City of Phoenix	City of Phoenix SWFI staff are doing more active case management and have become more proactive in reaching out to participants regarding needs and challenges encountered in being parents and students at the same time. Follow-up with participants involves check-ins on training status and subtle probing about any financial or other challenges that SWFI staff can help to address.	Retention is up: 15 of the 16 students in the January cohort completed their training, and the 16th told her Career Navigator that she was facing a personal challenge. The Career Navigator helped her withdraw without penalty, so she can resume training later.
Case management	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC held an intensive case management training through their partner, ICF. This focused on considering the whole individual and using motivational interviewing to draw out participants' needs so they can work to address barriers. This training was really interactive and helpful for staff in increasing their awareness of participants' challenges.	In process.
Coaching	Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.	As described in the January to April 2018 Bright Ideas brief , 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.	Students and staff provided positive feedback on the workshop, which featured an experienced HR professional and valuable information about networking and job searching.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Outreach and recruitment	Memphis Bioworks Foundation	Memphis Bioworks Foundation has developed a beneficial partnership with Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Memphis. The college provides contact information for potential Practical Nursing students who registered to take the HESI exam, which is the College's required entrance exam. Memphis Bioworks Foundation provided SWFI flyers and information to these registrants prior to their test dates. During the four days of testing each month, the SWFI Program Manager and recruitment staff were on site to share information with testers and schedule appointments for SWFI screening and applications.	Bioworks will engage students who passed the HESI exam in supportive services (the transportation supports are particularly valuable to health care students). Those who did not pass the HESI and were interested in training with another partner were referred to those partners after screening and eligibility determination.
Retention	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC holds regular meetings of all program participants to reiterate program compliance expectations, and create a space where all participants can share best practices and cultivate relationships. This meeting also engages outside agencies who are able to act as resources to program participants.	In process.
Training or education			
Career pathways	The Workplace	The WorkPlace redesigned their Career Counseling practices to build upon the information distributed in their Foundation Skills Workshop Week 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, as well as an opportunity to work with the Career Counselors to see other program options that they may not have considered. The Career Exploration Worksheet is available on Workforce GPS.	In process.
Career pathways	The Workplace	As described in the January to April 2018 Bright Ideas brief , The WorkPlace began a health care-focused job club to promote networking and longer-term learning among participants, graduates, and employers.	As of late April, there had been 15 participants in the job club. The Employer Specialist has gotten several area employers to speak to participants and interview participants while on-site.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Credentialing	OIC of Broward dba OIC of South Florida	OIC is working with their training partner to try to structure the program to ensure participants receive A+/N+ credentials. The training partner has made practice exams part of the coursework to understand whether participants are ready for the exams or not. In addition, SWFI participants will have 60 days to complete each certification (instead of the year provided to usual participants at the training partner site) and will not be allowed to enroll in additional training until they complete certification. They are also considering hiring highly skilled tutors to help students.	In process.
Short-term intensive training	Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	<p>As described in the April to December 2017 Bright Ideas brief, 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.</p> <p>As described in the January to April 2018 Bright Ideas brief, CareerSource developed a four-week entry-level entrepreneurial training, "Own Your Future," which aims to help participants develop an entrepreneurial mindset. This is held in three cohorts – morning, afternoon, and evening – for three days per week for one month, so participants can choose a time that works with their child care.</p>	This training model continues to meet participants' needs. As of July 2018, across the Microsoft and Own Your Future trainings, 72 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, and individualized services.	The first foundational skills workshop took place in January 2018, and 16 participants attended. OAI has now had 34 additional participants attend the workshop. All participants who have undergone the foundational skills workshop are still participating in SWFI.
Upskilling incumbent worker training	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network (Pacific Gateway) is meeting with child care providers to explore whether child care staff need more training to become certified; this is a potential source for recruiting incumbent workers in the education field, which is one of City of Long Beach's target industries.	In process.



Strengthening Working Families Initiative

Topic(s)	Grantee	Bright Idea	Outputs/Outcomes*
Working with institutions of higher education	City of Long Beach Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network	Pacific Gateway is exploring how to make training more accessible with their training partner, Long Beach Community College. They are exploring what online content would be feasible and accessible for participants. They are also exploring options for offering classes outside of work hours. Finally, they are looking at bringing a medical office receptionist training to a local community partner.	In process.
Working with institutions of higher education	Moore Community House	Moore Community House is partnering with local community colleges to provide training for more women. The community colleges asked for assistance with recruiting women into their nontraditional employment training programs. The grantee will provide 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.	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.