

Evaluation of the TechHire and Strengthening Working Families Initiative Grant Programs

Findings from the Implementation Study



Submitted to:

U.S. Department of Labor, ASP/CEO
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Submitted by:

Westat
An Employee-Owned Research Corporation[®]
1600 Research Boulevard
Rockville, Maryland 20850



Contract #: DOL-OPS-16-U-00136
September 2021

Evaluation of the TechHire and Strengthening Working Families Initiative Grant Programs

Findings from the Implementation Study

September 2021

Joseph Gasper, Maeve Gearing, Lindsay Giesen, Jocelyn Marrow, Benjamin Muz, Alan Dodkowitz

Submitted to:

U.S. Department of Labor, ASP/CEO
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Contract Number: DOL-OPS-16-U-00136

Project Director:

Joseph Gasper
1600 Research Boulevard
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Disclaimer

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) by Westat, under contract number DOL-OPS-16-U-00136. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Executive Summary	v
Data Sources	vi
Key Findings	vi
Future Reports	xi
Chapter 1. Introduction	1-1
1.1 Policy Context	1-1
1.2 Overview of the Grants	1-3
1.2.1 Program Model	1-4
1.2.2 Grantees	1-6
1.3 The Evaluation	1-7
1.3.1 Data Sources	1-8
1.3.2 Analytic Approach	1-9
1.4 Organization of the Report	1-10
Chapter 2. Partnerships	2-1
2.1 Partner Organizations	2-1
2.2 Partner Roles and Responsibilities	2-3
2.3 Engaging Partners	2-8
2.4 Partnership Successes and Challenges	2-12
2.4.1 Successes and Challenges Engaging Different Types of Partners	2-13
2.4.2 Other Successes and Challenges	2-15
Chapter 3. Recruitment, Screening, and Enrollment	3-1
3.1 Recruitment Strategies Used and Effectiveness	3-1
3.2 Eligibility, Screening, and Assessment	3-4
3.2.1 Assessments	3-7
3.3 Enrollment	3-7
3.4 Characteristics of Enrolled Participants	3-9
3.5 Challenges Related to Recruitment, Screening, and Enrollment	3-10

Table of Contents (continued)

Chapter 4.	Occupational Training	4-1
4.1	Distinctiveness of the Occupational Skills Training	4-1
4.2	Types of Trainings Offered	4-2
4.2.1	Classroom-Based Occupational Training	4-4
4.2.2	Accelerated Training	4-4
4.2.3	Work-Based Training	4-5
4.2.4	Distance Learning and Technology-Based Training	4-6
4.2.5	Incumbent Worker Training	4-7
4.3	Credentials	4-8
4.4	Career Pathways	4-8
4.5	Challenges and Strategies Related to Training	4-9
Chapter 5.	Supportive Services	5-1
5.1	Case Management	5-1
5.2	Supportive Services Offered	5-2
5.3	Funding for Supportive Services	5-4
5.4	Ability of Supportive Services to Meet Participant Needs	5-5
5.5	Challenges and Strategies Related to Supportive Services	5-7
Chapter 6.	Child Care Provision and Systems Change	6-1
6.1	Aim of SWFI Program-Level Activities	6-1
6.2	Other Barriers to Child Care for SWFI Participants	6-3
6.3	Child Care Services Provided to Participants	6-3
6.4	System-Level Advocacy and Awareness Raising	6-7
6.5	Child Care Systems Change	6-8
6.6	Service Delivery Streamlining	6-9
6.7	Program Sustainability	6-9
6.8	SWFI Program Success	6-10
6.9	Discussion and Implications	6-10

Table of Contents (continued)

Chapter 7.	Job Development, Placement, and Retention	7-1
7.1	Job Development, Placement, and Retention Services	7-1
7.1.1	Job Retention	7-3
7.2	Employers' Satisfaction with Program Completers	7-5
7.3	Challenges and Strategies Related to Job Placement	7-6
Chapter 8.	Conclusions	8-1
8.1	Key Implementation Findings	8-1
8.2	Plans for Sustainability	8-6
8.3	Next Steps for the Evaluation	8-6
References		R-1
Appendix		
A	Supplementary Tables	A-1
Exhibits		
1-1	Program goals	1-4
1-2	Conceptual framework	1-5
1-3	Timeline for data collection	1-9
2-1	Number of partners	2-2
2-2	Distribution of partners by organization type	2-2
2-3	Partner involvement in grant activities	2-4
2-4	Partnership models	2-11
2-5	Grantee success in supporting and strengthening their partnerships by organization type	2-12
3-1	Recruitment strategies used and effectiveness	3-2
3-2	Referral sources used and effectiveness	3-3
3-3	Minimum reading or math grade level	3-4
3-4	Minimum reading and math grade levels	3-5
3-5	Indicators utilized to determine financial eligibility	3-5

Table of Contents (continued)

Exhibits

3-6	Percentage of applicants that apply and are not suitable for the program	3-6
3-7	Included assessment areas	3-7
3-8	Number of individuals served	3-8
3-9	Percent of enrollment target met by grantees	3-9
4-1	Types of training offered	4-3
4-2	Credential offered	4-8
4-3	Major or moderate challenges to implementing training programs	4-9
5-1	Support services offered	5-3
5-2	Support services offered, by mode of delivery	5-4
5-3	Method of placing limits on supportive services	5-5
5-4	Perceived adequacy of supportive services	5-6
6-1	Barriers addressed by SWFI grant	6-2
6-2	Source leveraged to support child care	6-4
6-3	Grantee activities to accommodate participants' child care needs	6-5
6-4	Grantee system-level advocacy and awareness-raising activities	6-8
6-5	Grantee perceptions of the success of SWFI activities	6-10
7-1	Job development and placement services provided to participants	7-2
7-2	Methods used to follow up with participants after job placement	7-4
7-3	Length of time followup with participants after job placement	7-4
7-4	Employers' rating of referred participants compared to other applicants for the same positions	7-5

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the many individuals who contributed to this research. We are especially grateful to the staff members of the organizations implementing the grant programs and who we interviewed for this implementation study. At DOL, Jennifer Daley, Deborah Martierrez, and Christina Yancey provided support and guidance throughout the project. We are also grateful to the members of our technical working group—Gina Adams, David Berman, Mindy Feldbaum, Kevin Hollenbeck, and Jeffrey Smith—for their feedback throughout the project. At Westat, April Fales led efforts to develop the grantee and partner surveys, and Michael Hornbostel led efforts to field the surveys. Karen Stein conducted interviews with grantees. Yong Lee provided SAS programming support for the analysis. Frank Bennici reviewed a draft of the report and provided many helpful comments. Donna Bennett coordinated editing and production of the report. We are especially thankful to our partners at MDRC. Barbara Goldman, Rick Hendra, Frieda Molina, and Betsy Tessler provided invaluable insights that helped shape this report.

Executive Summary

The H-1B visa program, established in 1990 by Congress, allows employers to hire foreign workers to work in “specialty occupations,” such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, healthcare, business, financial services, and life sciences industries, on a temporary basis. In 1998, a user fee was added to fund scholarship and training programs that develop the skills of the existing U.S. workforce in high-demand fields that employ large numbers of H-1B workers. Those fees have funded over \$1 billion of U.S. Department of Labor- (DOL-) managed technical skills training programs designed to reduce or replace the need for foreign skilled labor. Two recent programs funded through this authority are the TechHire and the Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grants. The TechHire program provides accelerated skills training, whereas the SWFI initiative provides flexible training and child care supports to help adults obtain high-tech skills. The common elements of these programs are an effort to help make training more accessible and an effort to connect disadvantaged populations to high-growth sectors of the labor market. In September 2016, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) within DOL competitively awarded 39 TechHire grants and 14 SWFI grants. The funding opportunity announcement stipulated that grantees be a member of a partnership that included the following eligible entities: the public workforce investment system, education and training providers, and business-related nonprofit organizations.

Program Goals

TechHire

- Provide training to youth and young adults as well as individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and criminal records in in-demand H1-B industries
- Improve training completion and employment through accelerated training and supportive services
- Connect those who have received training or who already have the skills required for employment to employment, paid internships, or Registered Apprenticeship opportunities
- Design programs and services to reflect the needs of employers and participants
- Ensure broader change and sustainability and a strategy for adapting to rapidly changing market needs after the initial period of the grant

SWFI

- Provide low- to middle-skilled parents opportunities to advance in high-growth or in-demand H1-B industries
- Address barriers to accessing training and employment faced by those with child care responsibilities through activities such as co-location of training and child care or unconventional training delivery times or locations

Source: TechHire and SWFI Funding Opportunity Announcements, 2015.

The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) of DOL contracted with Westat and MDRC to conduct an evaluation of strategies used in the TechHire and SWFI grant programs. The evaluation includes implementation, outcomes, and impact studies. The impact study involves a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of services provided by five grantees to estimate the effects of their programs on outcomes such as skill attainment, employment, and earnings. The focus of this report is the

implementation study, which examines how 49 TechHire and SWFI grantees¹ implemented their programs and the perceived effectiveness of the strategies used. The report describes our findings and presents the lessons learned for improving future program implementation and employment outcomes for the target populations served.

Data Sources

The implementation evaluation examined implementation of these program components by weaving together information from six sources: (1) a survey of grantees fielded in summer 2019, halfway through implementation; (2) a survey of partner organizations fielded in winter 2020; (3) telephone interviews with grantees conducted between October and November 2019; (4) telephone interviews with partners conducted between January and March 2020; (5) program management documents including grantee applications and quarterly progress report narratives that all grantees submitted to DOL from 2016 through 2020; and (6) participant data from grantees as recorded in the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) data. The data for this evaluation was collected prior to COVID-19, and the findings will not reflect the changes grantees may have made to their programs as a result. The findings speak to perceived successes, challenges, and lessons learned in the labor markets in which the programs operated.

It is important to interpret the data with two limitations in mind. First, the qualitative data about implementation challenges and successes represents the perspectives of the grantee and partner staff who provided the information. The evaluation did not include other sources of data on implementation, such as participant interviews. Second, partner interviews were conducted with the primary partners of a subset of grantees and may not be representative of the experiences of all grantees and partners.

Key Findings

In this report, we examined implementation of key components of the grant programs. In this section, we highlight the key findings across sections.

Partnerships

- ***Grantees reported successes working with partners, including workforce investment system organizations, education and training providers, and employers to provide training and supportive services to participants. Despite these successes, employer engagement in program design and hiring did not always materialize as planned.***

Workforce investment organizations helped recruit participants, leverage funds for training and supportive services, and promote regional economic collaboration. Education and training providers helped expand training opportunities for participants. Employers helped to design programs and shape the curriculum to increase employment opportunities for participants. These partnerships were mutually beneficial. For workforce investment system organizations and education and training providers, the partnerships increased training options for their participants,

¹ Three TechHire and one SWFI grantee ended their programs prior to the completion of data collection activities for this study and were excluded from most of the analysis in this report.

increased their capacity to serve, and allowed them to target new populations. For employers, the partnerships provided a pipeline of applicants whose training was tailored to their specific needs.

Despite these perceived successes, employer engagement in some aspects of the program did not always materialize as planned. Five grantees and five employers said that more efforts were needed to engage employers in the program design and curriculum early in the grant. Beyond providing work-based learning and training for incumbent workers (front-line, low-skilled workers who need training to upgrade their skills), only half of grantees entered into agreements with employers to hire or interview program completers. As discussed below, four grantees reported that one factor that contributed to challenges engaging employers is that while the trainings were for entry-level jobs, the available job openings were often for mid-level jobs. Four grantees also reported that employers' unfamiliarity with the needs of low-income workers contributed to low employer engagement and lack of hiring. More intensive employer outreach, engaging employers early in the grant, and continuously soliciting feedback from employers were strategies that grantees used to ensure employer engagement throughout the grant.

Recruitment, Screening, and Assessment

- ***Recruitment of qualified applicants was a challenge for grantees due to the low unemployment rate during most of the grant. Youth and young adults ages 17 to 29 were especially difficult to recruit, and some grantees indicated interest in the program from older individuals who they believed were a better fit.***

More than half of grantees said that recruitment was a challenge. The tight labor market meant that potential participants were able to receive similar wages and benefits in occupations that did not require training. In addition, potential participants who were unemployed often had many barriers to employment which made training completion and employment difficult. About half of TechHire grantees experienced difficulty recruiting youth and young adults ages 17 to 29, as these participants were seen by grantees as either lacking in interest or motivation or in the basic skills to be successful in training. Seven grantees mentioned that they had many individuals ages 30 and older who were interested in the program but had to turn them away in order to meet the DOL target that 75 percent of individuals served were youth and young adults. These grantees indicated that older participants had the skills and experience to be successful in the more advanced trainings and were a better fit for the program. They felt that DOL should consider expanding the age range for the grant. As a result of these recruitment difficulties, 22 grantees did not meet their performance targets for the number of participants served.

Trainings

- ***Grantees varied in the extent to which the occupational training funded through the grants was similar to existing training programs.***

Eighteen grantees said that the occupational skills training they provided under the grant was distinct from existing training programs. In these cases, the distinctive features of the training programs included acceleration, work-based learning, or certifications. In contrast, 14 grantees said that the occupational skills training was the same or similar to existing training programs. The distinguishing feature of the TechHire and SWFI training programs in these cases was the availability of supportive and wraparound services.

- ***Flexible training approaches posed challenges. Short-term trainings were not always compatible with the level of skills required by available jobs. Similarly, online training was not a good fit for the circumstances of some participants.***

Six grantees and four employers said that short-term, accelerated training was too “basic” and did not equip participants with the occupational skills needed to obtain employment in H-1B industries. In addition, three grantees and one training provider said that it was difficult to retain participants for the duration of short-term trainings, despite the accelerated nature. Some participants, they said, want a quick path to employment and lack the financial security to remain outside the workforce while completing even a relatively short training program. The more intensive nature of the short-term programs made it even more difficult for participants to work during training.

Three grantees said they felt that the independent nature of learning online was not a good fit for low-income students and that competing priorities often took precedence when classes were online. Intensive case management and supports were needed if online learning was to be used. Two grantees also indicated that online training was incompatible with the occupations in which participants were interested, including healthcare and advanced manufacturing, which required hands-on training components.

- ***Retention in the training programs was a challenge for grantees due to participants’ lack of basic skills and personal barriers.***

While the programs were designed to provide supports to complete training, grantees experienced problems with retention in the training programs. Over 40 percent of grantees found it difficult to retain participants in training programs. The reasons for low retention according to grantees was that participants struggled academically with the training material as well as personal barriers. Twelve grantees had difficulty identifying and recruiting applicants who they believed possessed the academic skills required to be successful in the training programs. According to 11 grantees, some participants lacked interest or motivation in the training or enrolled and subsequently realized that the training was not the right fit. Other participants had barriers that made training completion difficult including the immediate need for employment, dependent care, transportation, and housing.

- ***Passing credential exams was a challenge for some grantees. Some participants did not understand that exams were required or how difficult the materials would be.***

Twelve grantees mentioned challenges related to participants passing exams. Two grantees mentioned that some participants did not understand that they needed to pass a licensure exam to work in the occupation for which they were trained—that completing the training and getting the certificate of completion was insufficient. Two other grantees mentioned that the compressed nature of the training courses left little time for participants to study for the exam outside of the course and that participants became disengaged when there was a time lag between training and the exam.

To overcome these challenges, grantees tried several solutions which they believed were successful, including administering tests at the same location as the training classes (two grantees), exam prep classes or study groups (three grantees), offering mentors (one grantee) and encouraging training providers to become testing providers (one grantee). The grantees believed that this reduced drop-off between completion of training and sitting for the exam. Other strategies

included offering exam prep classes and study groups. Finally, rather than offering the training straight through, one grantee split the training course into two courses and had participants take the relevant part of the exam after each class. They believed that this strategy led to an increase in the number of participants passing the exam.

- ***There was a mismatch between the level of the training and the skills required for available jobs for some programs. The trainings were for entry-level jobs, whereas employers were seeking entry-level candidates with work experience or candidates for mid-level positions.***

There was a discrepancy between the skill level of the intended training to “train workers with the skills required for *well-paying, middle- and high-skilled*, and high-growth jobs,” as described in the Funding Opportunity Announcements for TechHire and SWFI, and the relatively low level of skill provided by the training offered. Six grantees and three employers reported that some participants could not find jobs because employers were seeking candidates with higher skill levels and credentials or more work experience. They were looking for mid-level rather than entry-level candidates. Notably, “well-paying” and “middle- and high-skilled jobs” are not defined in the Funding Opportunity Announcement for TechHire and SWFI, and some programs made clear in their applications that they would be training people for entry-level positions.

As discussed, participant barriers played a role in training completion outcomes even for entry-level trainings, and some participants could not complete even the short-term trainings because of the need to work. Grantees that did have higher level trainings reported difficulties recruiting participants with the basic skills needed to complete those trainings.

Supportive Services

- ***Case management was one of the most valuable components of the programs according to grantees.***

One-quarter of grantees used a case management approach to deliver supportive services. Similar to the ways that a job coach or counselor assesses participants and helps place them in a job, case managers assess participants upon enrollment and help place them in trainings and connect them with supports. Case managers typically worked with participants throughout the duration of their training. The connection with a case manager typically began at intake with the development of an individualized service plan that listed long-term and short-term goals and any barriers a participant might face to completing training and obtaining employment. From there, the case manager would help connect participants to supportive services to mitigate those barriers and help them determine the appropriate training track. Throughout their involvement in the training program, case managers checked in periodically with participants via email, telephone, and in-person meetings to monitor their progress and need for services. However, five grantees said that participants continued to have access to case management services even if they needed to temporarily pause their training or after they found jobs. The hope was that continuing to offer support to participants while they grappled with challenging life circumstances would enable them to resume their training later on.

Child Care and Systems Change

- ***Grantees considered SWFI grant money as the funding source “of last resort” to use only when needed to fill gaps in existing child care service provision.***

It was necessary for SWFI grantees to patch together child care services for children’s specific developmental needs and for different phases of parental career development. Subsidized child care resources available in grantees’ communities had eligibility requirements or waiting periods that meant that no one child care resource in the community could serve all participants’ needs, or even one participant’s needs at all times. When participants’ child care needs could not be satisfied by another existing program, due to long wait lists, lack of eligibility of child or parent, lack of after-hours care, etc., 11 grantees utilized SWFI funds to pay for participants’ child care. For some participants, SWFI funds were the first funds accessed. For example, parents who did not qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) sometimes received SWFI funds to subsidize child care. In other circumstances, grantees used SWFI funds to pick up child care costs once the participant had “maxed out” other resources, or the child had “aged-out.” Some participants received SWFI funds to pay for child care for the early period of their training program or employment while their application to the state for subsidized child care was being processed.

- ***Child care systems navigation was essential to assisting parent participants in identifying appropriate child care and accessing subsidies.***

Grantees sometimes embedded a specific “navigator” in their organizations, but other possibilities were to spread “navigation” duties across career counselors, or to refer parent participants to a partner that provided navigation. How grantees accomplished navigation depended upon a number of variables: (1) the availability of other child care navigation resources in the community; (2) the extent to which participants qualified for subsidized programs (that is, how frequently did participants fall in the “gaps” necessitating additional effort to locate resources?); and (3) the ease with which participants may identify or access care on their own due to advertising, eligibility requirements, and bureaucracy.

- ***Grantees reported success bridging the workforce system and child care systems and working with child care providers to alter their services to accommodate participants’ needs. However, grantees experienced less success convincing employers to accommodate participants’ child care needs.***

Grantees worked with the public workforce system and training providers to provide a “one-stop shop” for training and child care and increase access to subsidies. Grantees worked with child care providers to help them clear code violations and increase liability coverage so that they could receive child care subsidies for minding participants’ children. They were also able to streamline payment and application processes. One area of success working with the workforce system was in co-locating training and child care. However, it is not clear if these arrangements will persist without SWFI funding. Three grantees indicated they had provided consultations about child care needs to employers. In some cases, grantees were able to advocate on behalf of individual participants with employers. However, working with employers accommodate low-income (and especially, single) parents was a challenge. Grantees reported little success persuading employers to accommodate participants’ child care needs, such as adjusting work hours to times that childcare is available.

Job Placement

- ***Grantees experienced challenges placing participants into jobs. Grantees attributed these challenges to participants’ lack of soft skills, participants’ barriers such as lack of transportation, and a mismatch between the level of the training and the skills demanded by employers.***

Only four grantees indicated that employers committed to hiring or interviewing participants, and three grantees said that employers made commitments but backed out. Grantees and employers identified a lack of soft skills as the most common reason that program completers did not get hired. Some participants could not find jobs because they lacked transportation (some jobs were not located near participants' homes, or work hours were in the evening when public transportation was not available). As discussed above, some participants did not get jobs because the level of the training did not match the available positions. Six grantees and three employers said that employers were looking for more experienced candidates with a higher level of skills than program completers. Five grantees said that difficulties experienced by participants earning certifications was a barrier to employment, which was attributed at least in part to lack of test-taking experience or testing anxiety on the part of participants.

- ***Despite these challenges, employers who did hire program completers were satisfied with the hires' occupational skills, though lack of soft skills was still a challenge.***

While some employers may have been looking for candidates with more experience, those that did hire program completers were generally satisfied. In interviews, all 11 employers interviewed provided positive feedback about program completers' occupational skills and noted that completers had more motivation than other applicants because they took the initiative to seek out and complete the program, which was difficult given their backgrounds. However, employers' opinions on the soft skills of program completers were less positive. Employers generally attributed the lack of soft skills to a failure to impart the skills on the part of the program.

Future Reports

In the first 3 years of implementation, grantees were successful in developing partnerships to provide training and supportive services to participants. However, the grantees encountered some challenges including retaining participants in the training programs and placing participants into jobs. The extent to which these challenges influenced the economic impacts of the programs is an open question. Future reports will present the implementation and impact findings from the RCT grantees, which will illuminate the effectiveness of the programs in improving participants' employment and earnings outcomes. These reports will provide a complete picture of the grant programs' outcomes and help DOL assess whether the grant programs met their goals of helping individuals with barriers access career pathways in H-1B industries and occupations.

1. Introduction

The H-1B visa program, established in 1990 by Congress, allows employers to hire foreign workers to work in “specialty occupations,” such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, healthcare, business, financial services, and life sciences industries, on a temporary basis. In 1998, a user fee was added to fund scholarship and training programs that develop the skills of the existing U.S. workforce in high-demand fields that employ large numbers of H-1B workers. Those fees have funded over \$1 billion of U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)-managed technical skills training programs designed to reduce or replace the need for foreign skilled labor. Two recent programs funded through this authority are the TechHire and the Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grants. The TechHire program provides accelerated skills training, whereas the SWFI initiative provides flexible training and child care supports to help adults obtain high-tech skills. The common elements of these programs are an effort to help make training more accessible and an effort to connect disadvantaged populations to high-growth sectors of the labor market. In September 2016, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) within DOL competitively awarded 39 TechHire grants and 14 SWFI grants.

The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) of DOL contracted with Westat and MDRC to conduct an evaluation of strategies used in the TechHire and SWFI grant programs. The evaluation includes implementation, outcomes, and impact studies. The impact study involves a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of services provided by five grantees to estimate the effects of their programs on outcomes such as skill attainment, employment, and earnings. The focus of this report is the implementation study, which examines how 49 TechHire and SWFI grantees² implemented their programs and the perceived effectiveness of the strategies used. The report describes our findings and presents the lessons learned for improving future program implementation and employment outcomes for the target populations served.

1.1 Policy Context

Broad economic trends have reduced the availability of high-paying jobs for people who do not have a college education. Wages at the bottom of the labor market have been stagnant and declining (in real terms) due to numerous factors, including the decline of unions, changes in labor norms, increased competition, and globalization.³ Individuals with no more than a high school education have seen their wages remain flat in real terms for decades, and their employment is often unsteady.⁴ While some of these low-wage workers are teenagers, they are increasingly older workers with more education.⁵ Moreover, the situation is particularly dire for low-wage, low-income workers with children (the target population of SWFI): Only a third of these workers have more than a high school diploma, and another third are high school dropouts.⁶ In addition, the labor

² Three TechHire and one SWFI grantee ended their programs prior to the completion of data collection activities for this study and were excluded from most of the analysis in this report.

³ Howell (1997).

⁴ Mishel, Bernstein, and Shierholz (2009).

⁵ Schmitt and Jones (2012).

⁶ Acs and Nichols (2007).

force participation rate among young adults (the focus of TechHire) is at historic lows by some measures.⁷

While the environment facing low-wage workers is often bleak and job programs targeting them are not always found to be promising, TechHire focuses on areas of opportunity where there is reason for optimism about prospects for measureable upward mobility. These interventions were mounted at a time of accelerating growth in demand for tech jobs with corresponding increases in wages. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that tech jobs will grow at a higher rate than the average for all jobs over the next decade. Also, jobs requiring IT skills pay more than the average private sector job.⁸

Most of the industries that are the focus of TechHire and SWFI have jobs with high but not insurmountable skill requirements. These jobs often require more than a high school diploma or equivalent but less than a 4-year degree, and have a substantial wage premium compared to lower skill jobs. The fields of business and finance, IT, healthcare, and some segments of advanced manufacturing are generating large numbers of middle-skill jobs that are “persistently hard to fill” and “provide not only decent wages initially, but also a pathway to increasing lifetime career value for many workers.”⁹ In addition, middle-skill jobs (defined as jobs which require more than a high school degree but less than a 4- year degree), constitute the largest category of jobs in the labor market.¹⁰

One barrier to employment and training for low-income parents is lack of access to stable and high quality child care. A recent summary of the interaction of child care and workforce development programs noted these challenges to aligning the two systems: the scheduling inflexibilities of workforce development programs; an inadequate supply of child care, especially high-quality child care; limited information on child care options; a limited supply of child care subsidies; and the cost of child care while in training.¹¹ To highlight one of these challenges, in 49 of the 50 states, child care is “unaffordable” as defined by standards set by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.¹² A recent report found that two-thirds of low-income working parents worked full-time (35 or more hours per week), but only 15 of them received subsidies for child care.¹³ Furthermore, there are barriers to accessing subsidies specifically for parents seeking to enroll in education and training programs. To qualify for subsidies, half of states place requirements on parents enrolled in postsecondary education or training programs, including work requirements, minimum hours requirements, limits on the number or type of degree, limits on the types of occupations, minimum grade requirements, and time limits.¹⁴ These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that parents in education and

⁷ Sum et al. (2014).

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (2020). [Computer and Information Technology Occupations : Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](#).

⁹ Fuller et al. (2014).

¹⁰ National Skills Coalition (2016).

¹¹ Adams, Spaulding, and Heller (2015).

¹² Child Care Aware of America (2016).

¹³ Eyster, Callan, and Adams (2014).

¹⁴ Minton, Tran, and Dwyer (2019).

training programs may require care for nontraditional schedules and in home-based child care settings, whereas subsidies have tended to be more widely available for center-based settings offering traditional schedules.¹⁵ One study found that, among parents receiving child care assistance from the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), only 7 percent were in education or training and working only 6 percent were solely in education or training.¹⁶ As such, for many working parents, child care is a substantial barrier to being able to participate in and complete training.¹⁷

1.2 Overview of the Grants

TechHire and SWFI attempt to help U.S. residents with barriers to participating in skills trainings access middle- and high-skill, high-growth jobs in H-1B industries. Both programs emphasize demand-driven training strategies, including employer involvement in training, usage of local labor market data, work-based learning, and sectoral partnerships, among other priorities.¹⁸ A key goal of both programs is to bring the training system into better alignment with types of skills that employers need for open positions. There is also an emphasis on providing access to middle-skill jobs through varied modes of training and nontraditional hiring. Often this means accelerating the training period for participants and connecting individuals to jobs that usually require postsecondary training via immersive “bootcamp”-style approaches (as opposed to a traditional, longer term college education approach).

“Using data and innovative hiring practices to expand openness to non-traditional hiring; expanding models for training that prepare students in months, not years; and activate local leadership to connect people to jobs with hiring on ramp programs.”

—White House document describing the core actions of TechHire

Although the two grant programs have similar objectives and training and employment strategies, there are also substantial differences. Foremost among these are the target populations. TechHire grants target several hard-to-serve populations: at least 75 percent of 17- to 29-year-olds who are out of school, and 25 percent of other eligible target populations, unemployed, underemployed and incumbent workers age 30 and older; as well as a target population of 50 percent of individuals with barriers that result from disabilities, limited English proficiency, and criminal records, and 50 percent of other eligible target populations.

SWFI grants target low-income parents for whom child care access is a barrier to investing in education and skills. This targeting drives other differences, the most prominent of which is that SWFI partnerships must include child care services and a system-change component to simplify and increase access to child care. While TechHire can include supportive services such as child care, it requires all participants to be assessed and served through one of three interventions: coaching and support (without training) and quick job placement in a middle- or high-skill job; short-term accelerated training (that may or may not lead to a credential) that results in employment placement; and training that results in a credential that puts individuals on a career pathway. SWFI

¹⁵ Henly and Adams (2018).

¹⁶ Gebrekristos and Adams (2019).

¹⁷ The Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) study affirmed these findings: a survey of HPOG program management and other staff members found that child care was the second most common barrier to program completion after financial issues (Werner et al., 2016).

¹⁸ Smith and Wilson (2016).

is slightly different in that all participants will enroll in some kind of training: short-term intensive; credential-focused intensive; or upskilling into better jobs for front-line workers. In addition, SWFI grantees were required to initiate activities that would bring together key stakeholders from various “systems”—such as the child care, workforce, and human services systems—to simplify and streamline access to services and supports that would enable low- to middle-skilled parents to successfully participate in and complete training. These activities are often referred to as “systems-level” or “systems change” activities.

Exhibit 1-1. Program goals	
<p>TechHire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training primarily to youth and young adults as well as individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and criminal records in in-demand H1-B industries • Improve training completion and employment through accelerated training and supportive services • Connect those who have received training or who already have the skills required for employment, but are being overlooked, to employment, paid internships, or Registered Apprenticeship opportunities • Design programs and services to reflect the needs of employers and participants • Ensure broader change and sustainability and a strategy for adapting to rapidly changing market needs after the initial period of the grant 	<p>SWFI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide low- to middle-skilled parents opportunities to advance in high-growth or in-demand H1-B industries • Address barriers to accessing training and employment faced by those with child care responsibilities through activities such as co-location of training and child care or unconventional training delivery times or locations

Source: Funding opportunity announcements.

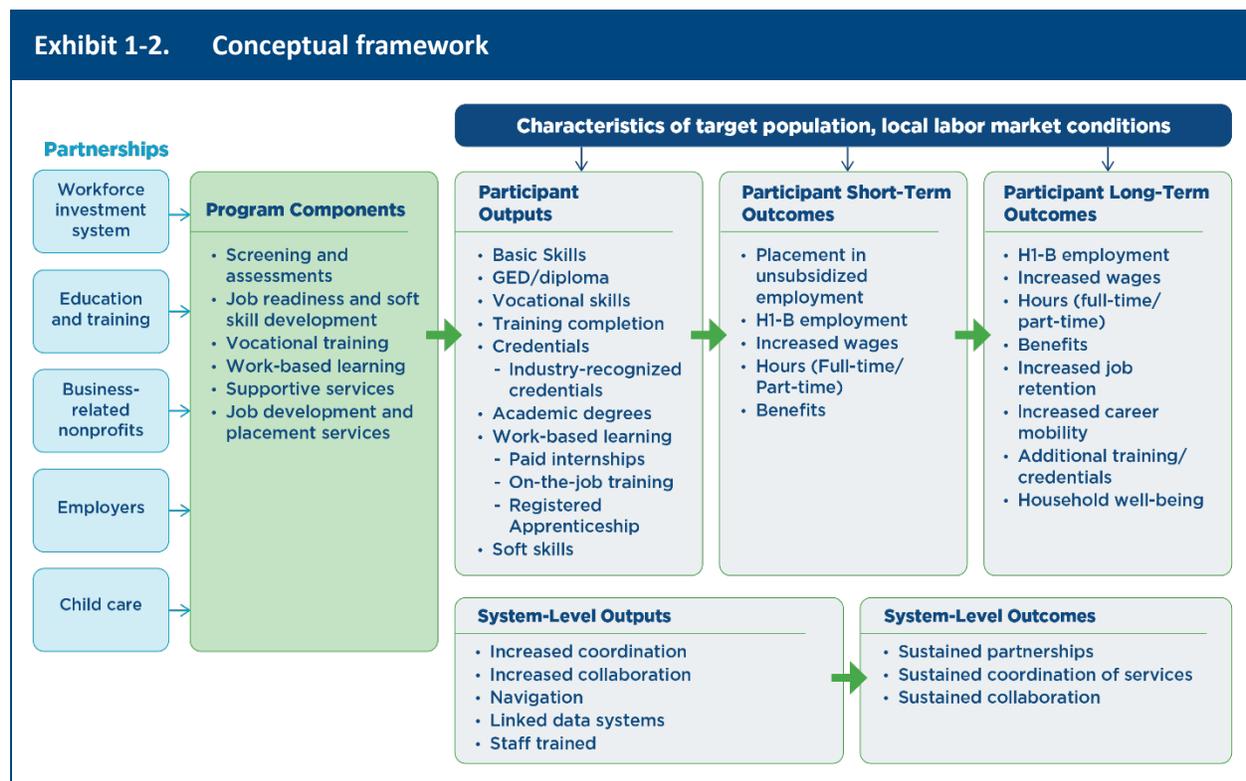
1.2.1 Program Model

We developed a conceptual framework to guide the implementation study (Exhibit 1-2). The conceptual framework is based on the program components defined in the funding opportunity announcements and refined to reflect implementation during the grant. The *components of the program* (shown in the green box) include the following:

- **Screening and assessments** includes screening applicants for eligibility and, once enrolled, using assessments to gauge the services and supports each participant needed.
- **Pre-employment services** to help prepare participants to work effectively in the workplace. These services included job readiness training and soft skills development.
- **Vocational training** includes short-term/accelerated training, longer term training that results in a formal credential, and incumbent worker training to upskill workers. These strategies were designed to provide skills in H-1B industries and occupations.
- **Paid work experiences** to increase participants’ skills and give them experience in a formal work environment. These services include apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and internships.

- **Supportive services** to encourage training participation and retention that include but are not limited to financial assistance toward training expenses (e.g., textbooks, testing fees), child care, and transportation. Grantees provide supportive services directly or through referral to partners.
- **Job development, placement, and retention services** includes job search assistance, job placement assistance, and job coaching/counseling. The goal of these services is to help match participants with jobs and employers that complement their goals and abilities. Grantees may also assist participants after they have been placed to ensure they are being supported and are adjusting to their new jobs.

Both grant programs utilized three central design principles. These principles included “human-centered design” (designing programs and services based on the customer’s needs), “adaptable design” (which allows for programs to evolve their processes as labor market and other circumstances change), and “systems design” (linking in a more direct and efficient way systems such as workforce, employers, and benefit systems).



Source: TechHire and SWFI Funding Opportunity Announcements, 2015.

Program components were designed to remove barriers to participation in training and help participants attain the *outputs* listed in Exhibit 1-1—increases in skills, completion of training, and receipt of industry-recognized credentials. Attaining these outputs should result in participants achieving one or more of the *short-term outcomes* of employment, employment in H-1B industries and occupations, and increased earnings. The short-term outcomes were designed to improve *long-term outcomes* of maintaining employment, placement along a career pathway leading to additional training and credentials, and advancement in careers.

Through partnerships (shown in the blue boxes), the grantees were expected to bring together members of the workforce development system to better coordinate services in a sustainable manner.

While SWFI grantees were required to engage in systems-level activities to bridge the workforce development and child care systems, TechHire grantees could also engage in these activities. *Systems-level outputs* include helping parents navigate the child care system and increased coordination and collaboration between systems. *Systems-level outcomes* included sustained partnerships and coordination and collaboration.

Finally, the *context* in which the programs operate influences implementation. Participant characteristics influence the program components, supportive service needs, outputs, and outcomes. Local labor market conditions, including the unemployment rate and employer needs in the target industries and occupations, affect participants' outcomes over the short- and long-term. This conceptual framework is inclusive of both TechHire and SWFI grants. The program components, outputs, and outcomes are intended to be indicative rather than exhaustive. The implementation study is concerned with the left part of the conceptual framework—the forming of partnerships and program design and development.

1.2.2 Grantees

In September 2016, ETA competitively awarded a total of \$150 million to 39 TechHire grantees and 14 SWFI grantees. The grants were for a 4-year period of performance, ending in September 2020. Grantee characteristics as described in applications provide a useful context for understanding implementation of the program components in subsequent chapters of this report (see Appendix Exhibit A-1):

- **Grant Amounts Ranged from \$2.1 Million to \$5 Million.** TechHire allocated between \$2 and \$5 million for individual grantees. Grantees that requested more than \$4 million were required to provide evidence of the program's impacts on employment and earnings based on scientific research. The average grant amount for TechHire was \$3.8 million and ranged from \$2.1 million to \$5 million. Only three TechHire grantees were awarded grants exceeding \$4 million dollars. SWFI grantees could apply for up to \$4 million. The average award amount was \$3.9 million and ranged from \$3.4 to \$4 million.
- **The Number of Participants Expected to Be Served Varied.** DOL required grantees to establish targets for the number of individuals served. On average, TechHire grantees expected to serve 512 individuals, but there was considerable variation. One grantee expected to serve 2,000, whereas two grantees expected to serve 325. As a result, the median was 418. On average, SWFI grantees expected to serve 571 individuals. One grantee expected to serve 160, and one expected to serve 1,500. The median was 400.
- **Grantees Tended to Be Education and Training Providers.** The funding opportunity announcement indicated that the lead grantee had to be one of the following: a workforce investment system organization, such as a Workforce Development Board or One-Stop Center; a nonprofit education and training provider, such as a community college or community-based organization that provides training; or a business-related nonprofit organization. Twenty-one TechHire grantees (58%) were education or training providers, 10 grantees (28%) were workforce investment system organizations, and five grantees (14%) were business-related nonprofit organizations. Seven SWFI grantees (54%) were

education and training providers, five were workforce investment system organizations (38%), and one (8%) was a business-related nonprofit organization.

- **Most Grantees Served Youth and Young Adults, but Some Served Special Populations.** TechHire grantees could choose to serve one of two populations with barriers to training and employment: (1) out-of-secondary-school youth and young adults between the ages of 17 and 29; and (2) special populations with barriers to training and employment, including individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and/or a criminal record. Twenty-eight TechHire grantees (78%) chose youth and young adults as their primary target population, and eight grantees (22%) chose special target populations. Among grantees that chose special populations with barriers, six served individuals with a criminal record, and two served individuals with limited English proficiency.
- **Target Industries Differed by Program.** Programs were required to target one or more of the following H-1B industries that are in demand in their local labor market: information technology (IT), advanced manufacturing, healthcare, life sciences, and financial services. Most of the TechHire programs (29 grantees, 81%) targeted IT, and just over half (21 grantees, 58%) focused on advanced manufacturing. The most commonly targeted industry by SWFI grantees was healthcare (10 grantees, 77%). However, IT and advanced manufacturing were also popular, as 9 and 7 grantees targeted these industries, respectively (69 and 54%). More than half of grantees in both programs targeted multiple industries.
- **Grantees Covered a Wide Geographic Area.** TechHire grantees operated in 24 states. Twelve states had more than one grantee operating within them. SWFI grantees operated in 13 states. Grantees covered a wide geographic area. All but three TechHire and half of SWFI grantees served multiple counties, an entire state, or multiple states.

1.3 The Evaluation

The purpose of the implementation study is to learn how the programs were designed, the success and challenges grantees encountered implementing the programs, and lessons learned from implementation. The evaluation research questions can be topically summarized as follows:

- **Grantee Program Descriptions.** What are the types and combinations of programs, approaches, or services provided under the TechHire and SWFI grant programs? What are the characteristics of the target populations served?
- **Implementation Procedures and Issues.** How were the programs implemented? What factors influenced implementation? What challenges did programs face in implementation, and how were those challenges overcome? What implementation practices are perceived as promising by grantees for replication?
- **Partnerships and Systems Change.** How were systems and partnerships built and maintained? What factors, according to grantees, influenced the development and maintenance of the systems and partnerships over the lifecycle of the grant? What challenges did programs face in partnership and systems building, and how were those challenges overcome? How did partnership development and maintenance strategies evolve over the lifecycle of the grant?

- **Effective Strategies for Overcoming Barriers.** How and to what extent did the customized supportive services and education/training tracks expand participant access to targeted employment, improve program completion rates, connect participants to employment opportunities, and promote innovative and sustainable program designs? What strategies and approaches were implemented and/or appear promising for addressing systematic barriers individuals may face in accessing or completing training and education programs and gaining employment in H1-B industries?
- **Removal of Barriers and Coordination at the Systems Level.** Did programs both remove child care barriers and address the individual job training needs of participants? If so, how was this done? What were the changes in the coordination of program-level supports (training and support services) as well as the leveraging, connecting, and integrating at the systems level? What was the reach and interaction of this program to parents who receive other Federal program supports?

1.3.1 Data Sources

To address the research questions, we gathered data from multiple sources:

- **Grantee Survey.** This web survey was a census of the 49 grantees operating their programs at the time of data collection. It was fielded between June and October 2019, halfway through implementation. The survey collected data on program organization, partnerships, screening and assessment, training, supportive services, job development, sustainability, and challenges and successes. All 49 grantees responded to the survey.
- **Partner Survey.** This web survey was administered to 566 partner organizations, who were affiliated with 45 grantees that provided partner contact information.¹⁹ It solicited partners’ perspectives on their roles, program implementation and sustainability, and the employability and performance of participants. The survey was fielded between January and March 2020, in the fourth year of the grant. A total of 284 partner organizations (50% response rate) responded to the survey.
- **Telephone Interviews with Grantees.** The evaluation team conducted 90-minute telephone interviews with

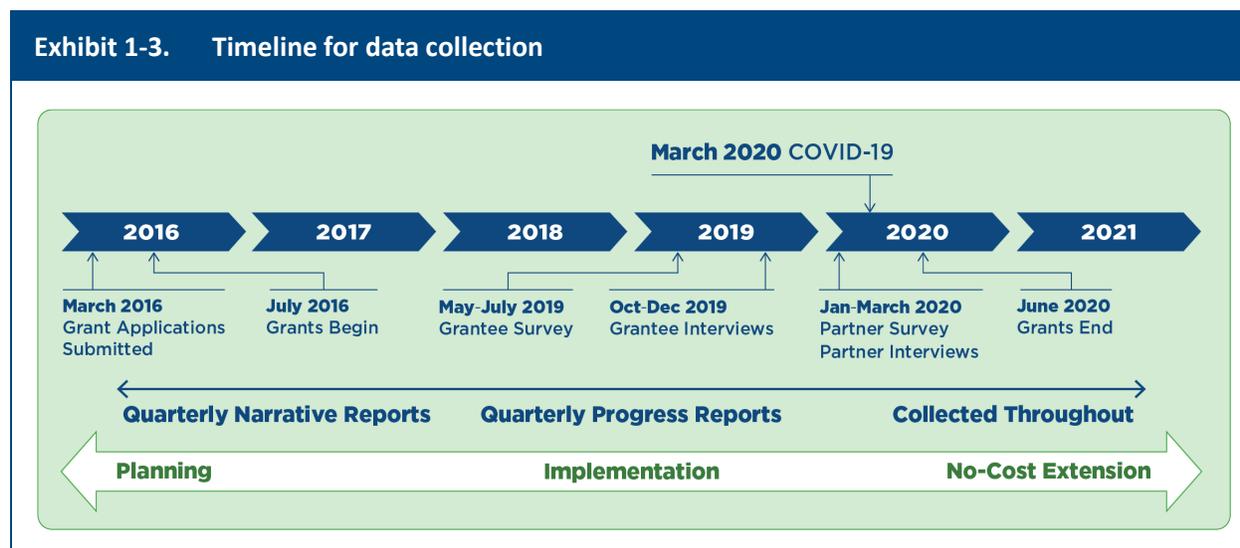
Data Sources and Number of Grantees/Partners
• Grantee survey: 49 grantees
• Partner survey: 284 partner organizations affiliated with 45 grantees (those who provided partner contact information)
• Telephone interviews with grantees: 43 grantees
• Telephone interviews with partners: 40 partner organizations affiliated with 12 grantees
• Program management documents (Quarterly Narrative Reports and Quarterly Progress Reports): 49 grantees

¹⁹ We worked with grantees to assemble lists of partners for the partner survey. The initial lists were assembled from grantee statements of work. We asked grantees to review the lists, add missing partners, and delete partners that were not involved. In addition, for each partner, we asked grantees to provide the following information: name and contact information, whether the partner received grant funds, and the level of involvement of the partner in grant activities. Partners that had low levels of involvement in grant activities were not contacted for the partner survey.

43 grantees between October and November 2019.²⁰ The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide and collected information on the program structure, partnerships, services provided, systems change activities, and perceived challenges and successes.

- **Telephone Interviews with Partners.** Following the grantee interviews, we conducted 90-minute telephone interviews with 40 partner organizations between January and March 2020. The partners were affiliated with 12 grantees (nine TechHire and three SWFI) and were selected to achieve diversity by organization type and, for TechHire, by the target population of their affiliated grant. The interviews yielded information on how partnerships developed, how grant activities were coordinated across partners, and what worked well (or not) during implementation.
- **Program Management Document Review.** Grantee applications provided information on program design and goals, partnerships, and the local context in which the programs operated. Grantees also submitted to DOL quarterly progress and narrative reports (QPRs and QNRs) from 2016 through 2020. These reports provided updates on partnerships, recruitment, employer engagement, technical assistance needs, and accomplishments.

The data for this evaluation was largely collected prior to COVID-19, and the findings will not reflect the changes grantees may have made to their programs as a result. (See Exhibit 1-3 for a data collection timeline.) The findings speak to successes, challenges, and lessons learned in the low unemployment rate environment in which the programs operated.



The implementation findings, in combination with the impact analyses conducted separately for the RCT, will provide valuable lessons—to both DOL and other entities considering implementing similar interventions—on what factors may facilitate or hinder implementation in different settings

²⁰ We did not conduct telephone interviews with the five grantees selected for the RCT because extensive implementation data was collected on these grantees from two rounds of site visits. One non-RCT grantee did not respond to our requests for a telephone interview.

and what approaches or practices are effective. These findings build on those reported separately for the five RCT sites.

1.3.2 Analytic Approach

We conducted analysis of the implementation data in several steps. First, we coded qualitative data from grantee and partner interviews and QPRs and analyzed the data for themes. Second, we conducted descriptive analysis of data from the grantee and partner surveys. Third, we triangulated the data across sources to paint a full picture of implementation. Fourth, we compared the data across grantees to understand the common challenges and promising practices and lessons learned. The implementation study explored the experiences of the two sets of grantees and partners as a whole but also noted differences in implementation. The study also compared the feedback of partners and grantees in order to understand any similarities or differences in their responses.

It is important to interpret the data with two limitations in mind. First, the qualitative data about implementation challenges and successes represents the perspectives of the grantee and partner staff who provided the information. The evaluation did not include other sources of data on implementation, such as participant interviews. Second, partner interviews were conducted with the primary partners of a subset of grantees and may not be representative of the experiences of all grantees and partners.

1.4 Organization of the Report

This reports describes grantees' implementation of the TechHire and SWFI programs. Each chapter includes examples and highlights of successes, challenges, and lessons learned. The remainder of this implementation report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 explores partnerships;
- Chapter 3 covers recruitment, assessment, and screening of participants;
- Chapter 4 examines training delivery;
- Chapter 5 discusses supportive services, including child care;
- Chapter 6 explores job development, placement, and retention services;
- Chapter 7 covers systems change; and
- Chapter 8 concludes with overall lessons learned for future programs.

2. Partnerships

Partnerships were a key component of the TechHire and SWFI grants. The funding opportunity announcement stipulated that grantees be a member of a partnership that included the following eligible entities: public workforce investment system organizations, education and training providers, and business-related nonprofit organizations.”²¹ If a partnership did not include a business-related nonprofit organization, it was required to have at least three employer partners or a regional industry association with at least three employers. SWFI grantees were also required to partner with a child care or early childhood education service agency that had expertise in the child care needs of families and the availability of existing services. Beyond these required partners, grantees were encouraged to partner with other organizations such as state and local governments, foundations, and supportive service providers. In this section, we discuss the types of partner organizations, partner roles and responsibilities, partner engagement, and challenges and strategies related to partnerships.

Key Chapter Findings

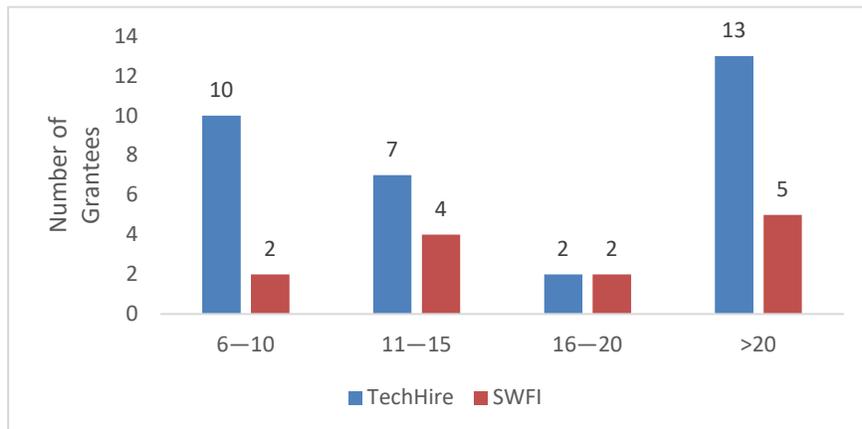
- TechHire partnerships contained 891 different organizations, and SWFI partnerships contained 196 organizations. The median number of partners for both grants was 13.
- Partner roles and responsibilities varied by type of partner: workforce system organizations were involved in recruitment and collaboration and systems change; education and training providers were involved in recruitment and training delivery; and business-related nonprofit organizations were involved in collaboration and systems change.
- Grantees organized their relationships with partners in multiple ways, defined by how closely partners were integrated into the grant and the channels of communication between partners.
- Grantees reported numerous successes of the partnerships including working with workforce system partners to expand services, aligning services to meet the needs of participants, and engaging employers to develop trainings to meet industry needs.
- Partnership challenges included engaging workforce system partners in the grant, working with education and training provider partners to offer flexible trainings, developing employer relationships, maintaining engagement over the grant period, and overcoming partner staff turnover.

2.1 Partner Organizations

Based on the partner lists assembled for the partner survey, TechHire partnerships contained 891 different organizations, and SWFI partnerships contained 196 organizations. Exhibit 2-1 shows the number of organizations with which each grantee had a partnership. The majority of TechHire grantees clustered at either end of the spectrum: 10 grantees (31%) had 6 to 10 partners, whereas 13 grantees (41%) had more than 20 partners. A smaller number of grantees partnered with 11 to 15 (7 grantees, 22%) or 16 to 20 (2 grantees, 6%) organizations. Five SWFI grantees had more than 20 partners. The median number of partners for both grants was 13. However, the number of partners that were actually involved in the grant was lower; the median number of partners with medium or high level of involvement in TechHire and SWFI was eight and seven, respectively.

²¹ A business-related nonprofit organization is an organization functioning as a workforce intermediary for the expressed purpose of serving the needs of businesses, a consortium or three or more businesses, or at least three independent businesses.

Exhibit 2-1. Number of partners

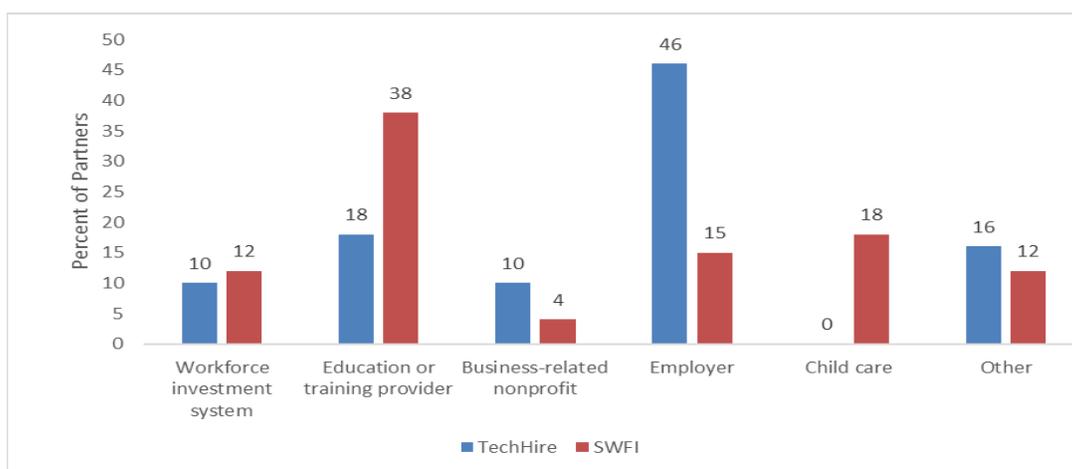


Note: TechHire N=32, SWFI N=13.

Source: Authors' tabulation partner lists assembled for partner survey.

Exhibit 2-2 shows the average distribution of partners by type of partner organization. Given the strong emphasis on employer engagement and the requirement that at least three employer partners be included, it is not surprising that, on average, 46 percent of TechHire partner organizations were employers. On average, 18 percent were education and training providers, 10 percent were workforce investment system organizations, and 10 percent were business-related nonprofit organizations. SWFI grantees had fewer employer partners and greater education and training provider partners compared to TechHire grantees. Education and training providers (38%) and child care organizations (18%) were the most common partners. Employers comprised 15 percent of partners, and workforce investment system and business-related nonprofit comprised 12 and 4 percent of partners, respectively.

Exhibit 2-2. Distribution of partners by organization type



Note: TechHire N=32, SWFI N=13. The average percent of partners of each type was calculated by taking the percent of partners of each type for each grantee and then averaging across grantees.

Source: Authors' tabulation partner lists assembled for partner survey.

Grantees were more likely to create partnerships with entities they already had relationships with than to develop new partnerships for the grant. According to the partner survey, for both programs, more than half of grantees' partnerships, on average, existed prior to the grant. However, existing relationships varied by type of partner (Exhibit A-2). In both programs, existing relationships were more common with workforce investment system and business-related nonprofit partners than education and training provider and employer partners. In both programs, more than 80 percent of relationships with workforce investment system and business-related nonprofit partners existed prior to the grant, compared to about 50 percent of relationships with education and training provider and employer partners. One area where the previous relationship was not substantial was for child care program providers and SWFI grantees. Only one-third of SWFI grantees had a previous relationship with their child care partner. Existing relationships offered advantages for grantees. As one grantee mentioned, having a previous relationship with a partner meant that the grantee understood more thoroughly the resources and capabilities of the partner going into the program. The grantee was able to design a role for the partner that suited that partner well, and there was less uncertainty about what the partner could or could not handle. From the partner's perspective, having a previous relationship increased the partner's comfort with signing on to the project; as one partner stated, he was more willing to trust that the program was a good opportunity for his organization.

2.2 Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The grantee survey provides a basic measure of the activities that involved grantee partners. Grantees were asked to indicate whether partners were somewhat, very, or not involved with various activities. Exhibit 2-3 shows partner involvement in activities varied by the type of partner entity. TechHire grantees indicated that their workforce investment system partners were involved with several aspects of their grant. Workforce investment system partners were most likely to be very involved in promoting regional collaboration for economic or workforce development (in 52% of grantees); outreach, recruitment, and screening participants (36% of grantees); and job placement services (35% of grantees). Education and training providers were very involved in curriculum development (74% of grantees), education delivery (85% of grantees), and training delivery (81% of grantees).

Business-related nonprofit organizations were most often very involved in promoting regional collaboration in workforce development (32% of grantees) but tended not to be very involved in other activities. This makes sense given the role of these nonprofits is to promote and make connections with employers. Less than 30 percent of TechHire grantees said that business organizations were very involved in other activities.

The most common roles for employers included providing work-based learning (55% of grantees had employer partners who were very involved) and recruiting and hiring of trained individuals (63% of grantees). However, beyond these roles, employer involvement was limited. Only 18 percent of grantees said employers were very involved in development of curriculum, 6 percent said employers were very involved in the design of the grant program, and no grantees reported that employer partners were very involved in the development of the grant proposal.

The types of activities in which partners were involved were generally similar in both programs. However, workforce investment system partners were more involved in every activity in SWFI. The greater involvement of workforce investment system partners is not surprising given the emphasis on systems-level activities to better align the workforce development and child care systems.

Exhibit 2-3. Partner involvement in grant activities

Level of involvement	TechHire				SWFI				
	Workforce investment system	Education/training providers	Business-related nonprofits	Employers/employer groups	Workforce investment system	Education/training providers	Business-related nonprofits	Child care agency/organization	Employers/employer groups
Writing of grant proposal									
Not involved	45	44	54	48	10	50	27	45	45
Somewhat involved	21	33	32	52	60	17	73	27	55
Very involved	33	22	14	0	30	33	0	27	0
Designing of the grant program									
Not involved	55	36	52	33	11	42	36	36	33
Somewhat involved	21	43	38	62	33	17	36	18	42
Very involved	24	21	10	6	56	42	27	45	25
Developing education or training curriculum									
Not involved	56	15	52	33	30	17	36	n.a.	33
Somewhat involved	28	11	41	48	50	25	45	n.a.	42
Very involved	16	74	7	18	20	58	18	n.a.	25
Outreach and recruitment, referral, screening, or enrollment of participants									
Not involved	24	11	15	32	10	25	45	18	18
Somewhat involved	39	46	67	56	30	33	36	36	64
Very involved	36	43	19	13	60	42	18	45	18
Education delivery									
Not involved	69	11	73	78	36	25	58	n.a.	64
Somewhat involved	17	4	19	19	18	0	33	n.a.	27
Very involved	14	85	8	3	45	75	8	n.a.	9
Training delivery									
Not involved	60	15	69	70	18	8	50	n.a.	17
Somewhat involved	20	4	23	18	36	25	42	n.a.	75
Very involved	20	81	8	12	45	67	8	n.a.	8

Exhibit 2-3. Partner involvement in grant activities (continued)

Level of involvement	TechHire				SWFI				
	Workforce investment system	Education/training providers	Business-related nonprofits	Employers/employer groups	Workforce investment system	Education/training providers	Business-related nonprofits	Child care agency/organization	Employers/employer groups
Supportive service delivery									
Not involved	33	41	48	80	9	42	64	8	55
Somewhat involved	36	30	33	20	55	33	27	42	36
Very involved	30	30	19	0	36	25	9	50	9
Job placement services									
Not involved	35	21	11	7	20	33	33	n.a.	27
Somewhat involved	29	46	61	57	40	42	33	n.a.	45
Very involved	35	32	29	37	40	25	33	n.a.	27
Giving advice and/or guidance to the grantee									
Not involved	30	22	20	16	20	42	42	25	27
Somewhat involved	42	41	52	47	30	25	25	33	45
Very involved	27	37	28	38	50	33	33	42	27
Providing participants with work opportunities for learning/training									
Not involved	42	15	19	9	10	17	25	n.a.	9
Somewhat involved	29	48	59	36	50	67	42	n.a.	36
Very involved	29	37	22	55	40	17	33	n.a.	55
Recruitment or hiring of trained individuals									
Not involved	48	48	48	3	18	50	18	n.a.	8
Somewhat involved	19	32	30	34	36	33	45	n.a.	33
Very involved	32	20	22	63	45	17	36	n.a.	58
Promoting regional collaboration for economic and/or workforce development^a									
Not involved	21	22	14	18	10	50	17	8	8
Somewhat involved	27	33	54	52	30	17	58	25	50
Very involved	52	44	32	30	60	33	25	67	42

Note: TechHire N ranges from 25-33. SWFI N ranges from 9-12. Range is due to not applicable and missing responses. n.a indicates question not asked of SWFI grantees.

^aChild care service providers were asked if they promoted regional collaboration for child care services supporting economic and/or workforce development.

Source: Grantee Survey, C13, C14, C15, C16, C17.

Finally, according to the grantee survey, child care partners were involved in more facets of the programs than just the provision of supportive services. In the survey, 67 percent of grantees indicated that child care partners were very involved in promoting regional collaboration, while 45 percent said that they were involved in outreach and recruitment and in designing the grant program.

In addition to the survey data, grantee and partner interviews further illustrated the roles of partners. Below we provide more details about the roles of partners based on the interviews.

Workforce Investment System Organizations. In interviews, 13 grantees and five workforce investment system partners emphasized the role of workforce investment system partners in outreach and recruitment. These grantees noted that WIBs were in frequent contact with potential participants through their other activities and provided valuable referrals. Five grantees also indicated that workforce investment system partners helped with training, including, in one case, providing IT training for program participants, and in another case, providing access to tools needed for advanced manufacturing coursework, thanks to the workforce investment system partner's connection with employers. WIBs also helped with the provision of job placement services. Two workforce investment system partners helped with workshops on job searches and other programs that could provide assistance to job searchers. Two workforce investment system partners provided support through connections to employers seeking workers. Finally, one workforce investment system partner was also involved in efforts to sustain the grant, through conversation with other regional workforce investment system organizations about potentially joining forces to continue providing some TechHire-like services.

Education and Training Providers. Education and training providers could provide more assistance to grantees than just the expected education and training services. Three grantees and three education partners spoke of the role of education and training providers for participant recruitment. In one case, the financial aid office of the training provider introduced the program to prospective participants, providing a rich referral stream. In other cases, the education provider included the TechHire program in the menu of potential programs available to people interested in training. Education and training providers could also have important connections to employers; two grantees said that training providers were helpful in recruiting and engaging employers for the program. Finally, three grantees also had education and training providers serving on advisory councils. For these three grantees, the advisory council was a way to bring together multiple stakeholders from across different areas to discuss the needs of the program and of employers. Education and training providers in this context could provide information about certifications and educational requirements and could interact directly with employers, business nonprofits, and others to ensure that the training provided by TechHire or SWFI met employer demands.

Business-Related Nonprofits. According to interviews with grantees and business-related nonprofit partners, the usual role for business nonprofits was to connect grantees to employers (8 grantees). This could take many forms. In two cases, the business nonprofit directly solicited employers to become involved in the program; they contacted employers they had connections with and introduced the program and the grantee. In other cases, the business nonprofit made a space for the program to market itself to potential employers by, for instance, organizing a job fair and inviting the TechHire or SWFI grantee or by inviting grant representatives to a regular meeting of employers at the business nonprofit. Regardless, grantees said that this help making connections with employers was highly valued and important. Four grantees said business nonprofits also helped recruit participants, usually through their involvement in other programs. For instance, the job fairs mentioned above were used to recruit both businesses and participants, and business nonprofits often ran other community events that bring target populations together. Finally, one grantee used a business nonprofit for credentialing. In this case, the business nonprofit was particularly interested in improving the job market in its field and had become involved in administering credentials; the partnership with the SWFI program helped more people enter that field.

“[Education/training providers] provide everything essentially. They do recruitment and enrollment. They do the placement. They do intake and orientation. They do the actual training provision, wraparound services, job coaching, and job placement services, employer outreach, alumni services, all of it.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Employers. Given the ultimate goal of the grant programs to place participants into careers, the role of employers demands scrutiny. The interview data highlights the important role played by employers in providing work experience and hiring. In interviews, eight grantees said the primary role of employers was to provide on-the-job training. For two grantees, on-the-job training was coordinated by the training provider; the grantee itself did not deal directly with employers. Rather, the training provider used existing contacts to help place students in internships. Seven interviewed employer partners spoke very positively of interns in TechHire and SWFI programs; they largely rated them as highly qualified and appreciated the opportunity to “test out” potential applicants prior to their program graduation. Eight grantees also said that employers informed training content and form and provided exposure to different jobs and fields to participants. In some cases, this meant serving on advisory councils (7 grantees); in other cases the guidance provided to grantees was more informal. One grantee spoke of working collaboratively with employers to adapt training as needed. Another grantee had created a “job developer” position within the grant program; the two job developers worked directly with employers to ensure that they would hire program graduates by explicitly meeting employer needs. A grantee spoke of changing the certifications their program offered on the advice of an employer; the employer recommended a different technical certification to make graduates more employable. Among the 11 employer partners interviewed, only one was involved early on in the grant program—and that employer was directly affiliated with the main training provider (a spin-off from the training provider). One grantee thought that employers did not have the time or interest to be involved in the programs at a granular level. The 11 employer partners interviewed were happy with the amount they were involved.

“All of our employer partners work with us to help us to gain insight into the employers’ perspectives...the main reason is to help us to understand what are their training needs.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Child Care Partners. In seven programs, the child care partner served as a navigator that could match participants with child care. For example, one SWFI partner had a Child Care Assistance Program, whereby SWFI participants would be connected with partner staff who would help them determine what child care they needed and connect them with a child care provider. In five programs, the child care partner directly provided the care; here, the child care partner was an early learning center including both early learning center networks (such as Head Start and Early Head Start) and independent learning centers. Finally, one program had neither a child care referral organization nor direct providers—the grantee was developing an approved directory of child care providers as its way of connecting participants to care. In all but this last case, the primary responsibility of the child care partner was to ensure access to child care services for grant participants, either by providing child care directly or by connecting participants to child care providers. However, child care partners also played other roles. The role of child care partners in SWFI is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Other Key Partners. Other key partners (for instance, advocacy groups and social service providers) similarly had a fairly unified purpose, with most used for participant recruitment (5 grantees) and some providing support services (3 grantees). For participant recruitment, grantees used community-based organizations (CBOs) to make contact with target populations. Grantees and partners mentioned that CBOs were trusted in their communities; when they recommended a program to prospective participants, it was often effective in sending that participant to the program. As one grantee said, the CBO “is critical in allowing us to broaden our reach.” CBOs also provided support services. For example, one CBO partner provided reintegration services to ex-offenders served by a TechHire program. Another CBO provided housing support to those experiencing homelessness. For two grantees, CBOs provided information on the needs of target populations for services. These CBOs did not directly provide services. Instead they helped grantees recognize the needs for particular types of services—what one grantee called a “community link.” Finally, one CBO provided instruction to grantee staff on case management.

2.3 Engaging Partners

While all grantees met the grant requirements for partnership structure, grantees varied in how they worked with partners to accomplish grant activities. Grantee partnership structures fell into one of three categories: one partner, wheel and spoke, and multi-partner. Each partnership structure, in turn, had impacts on styles of communication, grant management, and other aspects of implementation.

One Partner. In 6 of the 12 programs where partners were interviewed, the partnership model could best be described as “one partner.” In these programs, the grantee engaged primarily with one partner, most commonly the training or education provider. This partner was highly involved in multiple aspects of the program and engaged throughout the grant period, usually from grant planning on. In interviews, the partner took substantial ownership of the program, using language such as “our program.” Other partners took a subsidiary role, involved in limited capacities in the grant (usually one or two program activities) and interacted with either the grantee or the partner, but rarely both, and never with each other.

In one-partner models, most communication occurred between the grantee and their primary partner. They had frequent (weekly if not daily) communication, including emails, calls, and in-person meetings. Communication with other partners typically occurred through either the grantee or the primary partner, depending on grant activity and the relationship between the partners, and occurred on a more ad hoc basis. For instance, if the primary partner was an education and training

provider, they were likely to manage communication and grant activities for any other training and education providers on the grant. If the primary partner was a WIB, they were more likely to handle communication with other partners involved in participant recruitment.

The primary partner helped design the grant program and was substantially involved in implementation, typically managing multiple aspects. The primary partner had the authority to make changes to aspects of the program in response to problems, although usually only after consultation with the grantee. Consequential decisions were made with the primary partner and grantee together.

According to grantees, the advantages of the one-partner model were centered on capacity. Having a strong primary partner enabled the grantee to delegate aspects of grant implementation and management and increased the number of staff available for administration. TechHire and SWFI programs were complex grants with multiple moving parts; having a strong partner made it easier for them to manage. Grantees did not identify disadvantages of the model, but secondary partners in this model commented that they had little communication with the grantee and were not typically as integrated into the program as were partners in multi-partner models. For example, for one grantee where five partners were interviewed, only two commented that they felt integrated into the grant, while the other three discussed limited communication, only with the grantee. Communication between secondary partners and the primary partner and grantee differed widely, and there was less consistency generally in these secondary partner relationships and partner management.

Wheel and Spoke. In 4 of the 12 programs studied, the partnership could be described as “wheel and spoke.” In this model, the grantee had no substantial partner. The grantee was the sole organization (“the wheel”) to be substantially involved in multiple grant activities and the sole contact through which minor partners worked with the program (“the spokes”). This model was most common when the grantee was an educational entity that could provide the majority of the training on its own. Community college grantees (including one grantee whose partners were interviewed and who displayed a wheel and spoke model), for instance, often had in-house mechanisms for training, recruitment, and service provision. They were less likely to engage other partners in planning the program and were more likely to silo partners in particular tasks.

In this model, communication flowed exclusively from the grantee. The grantee was the sole organization involved in all grant activities, while the majority of partners worked on only one grant activity. Grantees differed in the amount they delegated implementation tasks to partners, with some being more comfortable delegating more work to partners, while others kept most activities under their own auspices. Regardless, the grantee was the sole organization with substantial decision-making authority.

Control was the main advantage of this model for grantees. They were able to quickly make changes to the program as needed with little consultation. Because the grantee was typically an organization with the capability to manage multiple grant activities (i.e., an organization with experience in recruiting, training, and grant management), they could design the grant directly to their own experiences

Multi-Partner Model

The Strengthening Working Families in the Chicago Southland Consortium, a SWFI project led by OAI, Inc., demonstrates strong partnerships across a diverse group of stakeholders that constitutes a multi-partner model. Their 11 primary partners met regularly and used multiple modes of coordination and collaboration to keep engagement high. Partners spoke highly of the program and viewed the consortium as a true joint effort.

Source: Grantee and Partner Interviews

and strengths. They felt comfortable with grant tasks and appreciated the flexibility and control that the model gave them. The disadvantages were directly connected to the model design. While grantees in this model had substantial experience, few if any had experience with every task related to the grant, and some delegation was required. Because partners were not as integrated into the program, grantees found it more burdensome to delegate tasks, and they had fewer established mechanisms for communication and collaboration.

Multi-Partner. Finally, two programs had a multi-partner model. Here, multiple partners were substantially engaged in the program, working on multiple tasks and communicating both with the grantee and with each other. As with the one partner model, in the multi-partner model, organizations expressed a sense of ownership in the project, with multiple partners talking about “our project.”

Multi-partner grants included the most mechanisms for communication and collaboration, and had both advisory councils and regular meetings with most if not all partners present. Indeed, communication was critical for the functioning of the grant and partnership, as consensus was needed for making decisions. Multiple partners provided input into all grant tasks, and grant management was delegated across multiple entities and teams of entities.

For grantees, this model allowed grantees to fully take advantage of the different expertise of multiple partners. With multiple partners understanding the full scope of the grant and invested in the program’s success, one grantee likened the program to a community effort. Grantees felt they had a wider reach with many integrated partners and were able to spread out the burdens of management across partners. However, managing so many actively involved partners could also be burdensome on its own, and these programs may have been less nimble—less able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances—than were grantees with other partnership structures. For example, one multi-partner model grantee spoke of wishing to shift to serving other industry sectors, but found it difficult to make large-scale changes given the complex partnerships already in place.

Exhibit 2-4. Partnership models



2.4 Partnership Successes and Challenges

Grantees experienced both successes and challenges working with partners throughout the grant period. Partnerships with a variety of entities were critical to providing services to participants and achieving successful outcomes. In the grantee survey (Exhibit 2-5), all TechHire grantees indicated that they were successful or very successful in supporting and strengthening partnerships with education or training providers, and most (more than 90%) indicated that they were successful with employers or business-related nonprofit groups. Fewer TechHire grantees (79%) indicated that they were successful or very successful in developing relationships with workforce investment boards. Unlike TechHire grantees, all SWFI grantees reported success in partnerships with WIBs. In Exhibit 2-5 above, SWFI grantees survey responses indicated that WIBs were involved in all grant activities. More than 90 percent of SWFI grantees also reported success with child care agencies or organizations, business-related nonprofit organizations, and employers. Two SWFI grantees (17%) reported that they were not successful in their partnerships with education and training providers.

Exhibit 2-5. Grantee success in supporting and strengthening their partnerships by organization type				
Organization type	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Workforce investment system organizations				
Very successful	13	38	3	33
Successful	14	41	6	67
Not successful	7	21	0	0
Education or training providers				
Very successful	14	48	6	50
Successful	15	52	4	33
Not successful	0	0	2	17
Child care agencies or organizations				
Very successful	n.a.	n.a.	6	50
Successful	n.a.	n.a.	5	42
Not successful	n.a.	n.a.	1	8
Business-related nonprofit organizations				
Very successful	7	23	4	36
Successful	23	74	6	55
Not successful	1	3	1	9
Employer or employer groups				
Very successful	15	43	4	36
Successful	18	51	6	55
Not successful	2	6	1	9

Note: TechHire N ranges from 29-35. SWFI N ranges from 9-12. Range is due to not applicable and missing responses.

Source: Grantee Survey, C19.

2.4.1 Successes and Challenges Engaging Different Types of Partners

Workforce Investment System Organizations. Across both programs, 13 grantees discussed the important role that workforce investment organizations played in recruiting participants. One grantee said that they “embedded” seven staff at the local One-Stop to screen participants for the program and help to bridge the gap between workforce and supportive services systems. Another grantee said that when two large employers closed, the workforce investment system organization worked with the grantee to get the laid off workers trained and provided additional funding for the training. Two grantees also mentioned successes with involvement of the WIB in promoting regional economic collaboration. As with employers, workforce investment system organizations served on advisory boards for two grantees and provided valuable advice about training and employment opportunities. Workforce boards also reported that they benefited from these relationships. Two workforce investment system partners said that the partnership allowed both organizations to leverage each other’s funds to provide training to more participants. Two grantees mentioned that the partnerships provided more training options for their customers. One workforce investment system partner said that by placing participants into jobs, it helped the business service team expand its relationship with employers in the IT space, thereby increasing opportunities to place individuals they served in other programs into jobs with IT employers more broadly.

“Well, I think the benefits of the partnership are adding more capacity to the entire workforce system... it opens up more participation or more training for our customers, too. So it’s really adding to the capacity of what we’re trying to do as an entire workforce system. And when I say workforce, I’m not just talking about the public workforce system, which is WIOA. I’m talking about the whole system, whether it’s our partners, whether it’s other state agencies, whatever that is.”

—Workforce investment system partner

Source: Partner interviews

Despite these successes, some grantees reported that they struggled to engage workforce investment system partners. Seven grantees stated in interviews that workforce investment system partners were not really involved in their programs; interviews with six workforce investment system partners similarly showed a low level of involvement. Grantees attributed this to lack of resources or staffing on the part of the workforce investment system organizations. One grantee said that the workforce investment system organization partner had had frequent turnover and did not have the capacity to offer more help than the occasional referral. In other cases, grantees felt that workforce investment system partners had different priorities than did the grantee; one grantee explained that the workforce investment system partner was focused primarily on its own programs or the grants that it administered, including the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and was not willing or able to provide much help for TechHire. One grantee felt it could be helpful to engage workforce investment system partners by giving them clearly defined roles within the program. Instead of trying to engage workforce investment system partners in multiple aspects, as grantees tried to do with other partners, this grantee felt that finding one particular aspect of the project for the workforce investment system partner to work on helped keep them engaged.

Education and Training Providers. Grantees also reported that they were successful in using partnerships with education and training providers to increase training opportunities to additional participants and additional fields beyond what the grantees could serve on their own. Five grantees described relationships with education and training providers as giving them openings to new industries. Based on the feedback of employers, one grantee, also an education and training provider, indicated that they partnered with another community college, which allowed them to offer additional trainings in advanced manufacturing along a career pathway. Two grantees and two education and training provider partners spoke of how relationships with education and training providers allowed them to serve new populations, thanks to the experience those training providers brought to serving particular populations. For example, one grantee that was a training provider mentioned that their partnership with a local community college allowed them to provide training to additional participants that they did not have the capacity to serve. The grantee provided an on-site coach for case management and supportive services.

“...the benefits of the partnership specifically for the student is it keeps students in the program. The students who are part of this grant—part of this initiative—have one less thing to worry about as far as tuition. And this is a big deal to have some tuition funding assistance that allows them to stay and matriculate through the program without having to stop and take a semester off to work and build up money. It takes the stress off of their families. It’s an enormous assistance in helping them complete the program.”

—Education and training provider partner

Source: Partner interviews

Despite the successful relationships between grantees and education and training providers, some grantees reported challenges. Four grantees said that their education and training providers could be inflexible in accommodating new training modalities, such as short-term trainings, bootcamps, and night classes. Grantees with these challenges worked to overcome them by seeking out partnerships with new education and training providers. Three grantees felt that they were not a priority for their training provider, as the provider juggled multiple populations and programs. One grantee struggled with their education and training provider because the provider had little experience working with youth populations.

According to grantees, building these types of successful partnerships with education and training providers involved strategically approaching possible partners. Two grantees spoke of being thoughtful about what education and training providers they approached, specifically reaching out to providers who had demonstrated experience working with their target populations. Three grantees also spoke about considering the capacity and longevity of potential partners. Larger providers offered the most opportunity for increased scope in serving participants as well as larger staffing for implementation, while more established providers likely had prior experience in partnerships.

Employers. Successes with employer partnerships were also crucial. Grantees worked with employers throughout the grant period to make mid-course adjustments as needed. Eight grantees discussed the important role that industry partners played in shaping the training programs and curriculum to increase employment opportunities for program completers. One grantee said that based on feedback from one employer about the need for software developers, they convened 10 other employers to determine if the need existed more widely. Based on the feedback received from employers, the grantee developed additional IT classes to meet industry needs. One grantee described how they, in response to employer feedback, revised the curriculum from four separate degree programs in IT into a single, multidisciplinary degree program with five specializations and additional elective courses. One grantee reported that they required employers to provide feedback

on the skills deficits of program completers that they hired, which the grantee used to make changes to the curriculum. Two grantees also cited successes with work-based learning.

In interviews, five employers said that the main benefit of the partnership was that it provided a pipeline of applicants whose training was tailored to the specific needs of the company. One employer was impressed that based on feedback, a grantee added four IT certifications and all applicants referred by the grantee had one of the certifications. Another employer said that they began to only hire applicants who also met the eligibility requirements for the program so that the employer could refer its workers to the program for training. All eight of the employers interviewed indicated that they would like to continue working with the grantee. Two employers mentioned that the internships were valuable for allowing them to screen potential hires.

Grantees spoke critically of efforts to reach and engage employers; five grantees and five partners said that more efforts were needed, including earlier engagement of employers in the grant process and more and more varied outreach, such as attending business fairs, creating advisory boards, and inviting employers to community presentations. Five employer partners said that they and businesses like them needed to be brought on early in the process to ensure program success, so that they could guide the training—for instance, by suggesting what certifications programs could include. Employers in one-partner models were more likely than employers in wheel-and-spoke or multi-partner models to complain of having little communication with grantees and other partners and to not be fully integrated in the program (2 employers in one partner versus no employers in wheel and spoke or multi-partner).

Grantees reported several facilitators of employer engagement. First, seven grantees spoke of bringing in employers early as a way to gather important input on program design and as a way to integrate employer partners into the program and sustain engagement over the course of the grant. Second, eight programs that involved employers in training design, whether initially or during implementation, reported developing stronger employer relationships as a way of getting employers to invest in the program. Third, programs with high employer engagement had strong communication mechanisms, often including committees where employers could speak with multiple organizations involved in the program (7 grantees). This allowed employers to be better informed about the program and for them to provide feedback regularly.

“So that’s the biggest thing with [the grantee]: they listen to their partner companies and really just pivot depending on what the companies are looking for.”

—Employer

Source: Partner interviews

2.4.2 Other Successes and Challenges

Nine partners spoke of successes aligning services across partners within the program. Aligning services meant coordinating policies across organizations and reducing barriers to service delivery. For example, one organization spoke about making sure that income requirements for child care subsidies aligned within the child care organization and the grantee, to ensure that participants were getting the help they needed. Another grantee spoke of aligning accreditation requirements between the grantee and the training provider—that by choosing a training provider who used similar accreditation metrics in their own self-evaluation, they found a partner who was motivated to ensure that participants received credentials.

Aligning services was seen by partners and grantees as crucial for efficient service delivery and successful partner integration. Alignment involved frequent communication and planning; organizations had to work together to understand each other's processes and work to meet each other's needs. One facilitator for successful alignment was having advisory councils (noted by five grantees)—these helped organizations integrate and provided a channel for communication and collaboration. Six grantees also cited a flexible approach as helpful to facilitate alignment; organizations who were willing to change their service delivery or typical ways of doing things made it easier to align services. The 10 partners who pointed at a lack of service alignment as a challenge in their programs cited uneven communication and lack of flexibility as barriers.

A challenge according to four grantees was staff turnover in partner organizations. This posed challenges for services and program delivery but also to partner relationships and engagement. When staff left, the organization lost institutional knowledge about the grant program and resources with which to manage grant responsibilities. Further, many partnerships relied on preexisting personal relationships between staff at the grantee and partner organizations. Partnerships could also be unstable if the primary linkage was between only two people—if one staff member left, the entire partnership could be in jeopardy. According to 11 grantees, one successful strategy for dealing with this challenge was to diversify the number of contacts across organizations and further integrate partners into the grant. While initial contact between organizations could be limited, successful partnerships expanded on these contacts by building relationships across organizations at multiple levels. The more connections between organizations, the less likely that staff turnover would be a problem. Integrating partners in multiple aspects of the program could also mitigate the effects of staff turnover, for similar reasons. If an organization was involved in multiple aspects of the grant, more staff were likely involved as well, and the parameters of the grant more broadly understood.

Finally, even when partners were successfully engaged early, four grantees struggled with maintaining that engagement over time. Partners could be engaged at times before drifting, becoming difficult to contact. The grants are multiyear projects, and some roles (for example, on the job training) may only be needed later in the grant period, but this could be challenging for grantees brought on board much earlier in the process. Grantees suggested several techniques for overcoming this challenge. First, three grantees said that finding multiple ways of engaging partners was helpful. That is, rather than relying on one single communication and coordination mechanism—for instance, monthly meetings—successful grantees said that partners remained more engaged if multiple modes were used. In practice, this meant a combination of in-person group meetings, one-on-one meetings, calls, and emails. Another strategy used by one grantee was to host debrief meetings with partners as different aspects of the program were implemented to discuss how implementation had gone. Even if one partner had not been directly involved in that aspect of implementation, including them in debriefs discussing that aspect of implementation could keep them engaged and improve the program.

“[T]he main objective of creating employment opportunities is to really map out the methodology and building before kind of rushing into just starting a program and then having the issue of finding those opportunities, just making sure they really understand and have strong relationships in place like what I discussed before on the—because that drives the programming. You need to first identify that employer need and then build the program around that piece and understanding the local market for those types of roles.”

—Partner

Source: Partner interviews

3. Recruitment, Screening, and Enrollment

An important component of the grants was recruitment, screening, assessment, and enrollment activities. The two grant programs recruited different target populations—youth and young adults with barriers (TechHire) and low-income parents (SWFI). Grantees used a variety of outreach methods to ensure that they met the enrollment targets they proposed. In addition to the eligibility criteria established by DOL, most grantees used at least some upfront screening to determine whether individuals were a good fit for their program—for example, education level, need for training, and motivation. Once participants enrolled, grantees used a variety of assessments to determine training and supportive service needs. Grantees were required to set performance targets, which included the number of individuals served, and to report progress to DOL on a quarterly basis. This chapter presents an overview of recruitment strategies and screening and assessment activities used by grantees, and the challenges and strategies related to recruitment, screening, and assessment. This section also reports on the progress that grantees made toward meeting their enrollment targets and the characteristics of participants enrolled.

3.1 Recruitment Strategies Used and Effectiveness

Key Chapter Findings

- In general, active recruitment strategies were viewed as more effective than passive recruitment strategies by grantees. Referrals from partners were seen as the most effective source of qualified applicants.
- Grantees varied considerably in the eligibility and screening criteria that they used. Most grantees accepted most applicants into the programs.
- Few grantees met their enrollment targets by the end of the initial 4-year grant period in June 2020. Only 32 TechHire and 3 SWFI grantees met or exceeded their enrollment targets. However, additional grantees may meet enrollment targets under no-cost extensions.
- Participant characteristics were consistent with the goals of the grants. TechHire participants tended to be ages 17 to 29, male, and white. SWFI participants tended to be female, ages 30 and older, Black or Hispanic, and low income.
- Recruitment was one of the biggest challenges faced by grantees. Recruitment was challenging due to the low unemployment rate, participants' low levels of education and skills, employer demand for more experienced, mid-level workers, and participants' barriers including transportation and the need for immediate employment.
- Despite the difficulty recruiting participants, grantees and partners felt that additional screening was needed to improve participant retention.

The grantee survey asked grantees about the recruitment and outreach methods used and the perceived effectiveness of each method (Exhibit 3-1). The most common methods used by nearly all TechHire grantees were flyers, posters, and informational materials (97%), in-person presentations in the community (94%), grantee/partner websites (89%), and Facebook, Twitter, and social media (89%). Most of these were passive strategies. Less frequently used strategies included direct mail campaigns (39%) and TV or radio announcements (33%). The most active strategy, door-to-door outreach, was used by only 11 percent of grantees.

"I think we do that [social media] just to do that. It really is, make that connection with that perspective students talk to that student and then stop them, so they pick the flyer and come to school."

Source: Grantee interviews

Many of the most commonly used outreach and recruitment strategies were not rated as particularly effective by grantees. Social media, grantee/partner websites, poster, and other informational material, which were used by 89 percent or more of grantees, were rated as

effective by only about half of grantees. In contrast, door-to-door outreach, which was used by only 11 percent of grantees, was rated as effective by all TechHire grantees who used it. While SWFI grantees also tended to rely on passive recruitment measures, no one measure was seen as particularly effective for SWFI grantees.

"To be honest, it's making sure that you're doing all of them at the same time. That's the only advice I could give. Doing your email blasts, your social media, and your flyer. You have to do all of them in order to see the real success because when we stuck to just doing one, it was very slow coming in."

Source: Grantee interviews

Exhibit 3-1. Recruitment strategies used and effectiveness

Recruitment method	TechHire		SWFI	
	Used the method (%)	Rated the method as effective (%)	Used the method (%)	Rated the method as effective (%)
Door-to-door outreach	11	100	50	33
In-person presentations in the community	94	73	100	64
Facebook, Twitter, other social media	89	55	100	50
Flyers, posters, or other informational materials	97	53	100	58
Use of grantee/partner websites	89	52	92	55
TV or radio public service announcements	33	36	50	50
Direct mail campaigns	39	23	42	20
Toll-free informational hotlines	3	0	25	0

Note: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Survey, D1.

In grantee interviews, active recruitment strategies were also seen as more effective than passive recruitment strategies. Ten grantees said that strategies that involve interaction with potential participants are most effective. One active strategy mentioned by six grantees and one partner was hiring a recruitment specialist. Through a "boots on the ground" approach, the recruitment specialist could increase word of mouth about the program and increase referral networks. Recruitment specialists attended high school and college career fairs, community job fairs, WIB information sessions, high school football games, and door-to-door canvassing. Another strategy for improving recruitment used by one grantee was to enlist the support of program graduates to hand out flyers, because they could more effectively answer questions and could suggest locations to hand out flyers where prospective participants could be found. In interviews, three grantees said that job fairs were not a good source of applicants because most individuals at job fairs were looking for immediate employment. Two grantees said that wraparound strategies of outreach, where grantees use multiple outreach methods and multiple recruiting organizations, were needed. For example, one grantee highlighted recruiting by enlisting both their own program partners and their program partners' community partners, as a way to increase reach into targeted areas and populations.

A strategy for improving passive recruitment strategies was to customize the marketing materials to the program’s target population. This was especially important in SWFI. One grantee said that they altered marketing materials to feature photos of women in the training occupations. Another grantee developed small cards that had a photo of a child and prominently featured the word “child care.”

In addition to conducting their own outreach, grantees also relied on referrals from partners and other organizations (Exhibit 3-2). All grantees (both TechHire and SWFI) reported referrals from word of mouth. For TechHire grantees, community-based organizations (94%), education or training providers (83%), workforce investment boards (78%), and employers (72%) were common sources of referrals. Word of mouth was rated by grantees as the most effective referral source (91% of TechHire grantees and 75% of SWFI grantees).

Targeting Marketing Materials

The Mississippi Working Opportunities for Women (MS-WOW) project, a SWFI project led by Moore Community House, highlights how grantees can adapt their marketing materials for greater recruitment success. MS-WOW seeks to place women in fields such as construction. They believed that including pictures of female program graduates in construction positions in their marketing materials drove greater interest in their program.

Source: Grantee interviews

Exhibit 3-2. Referral sources used and effectiveness

Referral method	TechHire		SWFI	
	Used the method (%)	Rated the method as effective (%)	Used the method (%)	Rated the method as effective (%)
Word of mouth	100	91	100	75
Employers and employer groups	72	77	83	40
Community-based organizations	94	70	92	73
Education or training providers	83	66	92	60
Other Government agencies	44	60	67	50
Workforce Investment Board or One-Stop Career Centers	78	52	92	55

Note: TechHire N=36, SWFI N= 12.

Source: Grantee Survey, D2.

In interviews, grantees confirmed that referral was more effective than recruitment and outreach in identifying eligible participants for these grant programs. Twelve grantees said that referrals from partners was the most effective source of qualified applicants. The relationships between the partner organizations and potential participants was seen as the key to successful recruitment. One partner, a local Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) office, informed all recipients about the grantee’s program. Another partner, a community college, informed all financial aid applicants about the free training program at the grantee. One grantee surveyed participants to ask how they had heard about the program; over half had heard from their academic advisor, showing the power of referrals. Another important strategy was word of mouth. Eleven grantees said that word of mouth was the most effective referral source. These grantees spoke of the success of program completers at recruiting their friends, families, and acquaintances for the programs. Two grantees mentioned developing surveys to understand where participants learned about the grant and focusing on the best places.

“The majority of our participants come through there. And it works out because we attend their orientation sessions every week and we know that the people who are sitting in on those sessions are qualified for the program. That is not a question, and then it just comes back to whether they’re interested and a good fit. So that has been really helpful and has maintained kind of a constant flow of interested participants.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

3.2 Eligibility, Screening, and Assessment

In addition to the eligibility criteria set forth by the grant itself, grantees could apply additional eligibility criteria to ensure that participants had the education and skills needed to succeed in the training. About two-thirds of grantees in both programs required participants to have a high school diploma or GED. Beyond this, requirements for academic skills varied widely across programs (Exhibit 3-3). Half or more of grantees in both programs required minimum reading and math levels to enroll in the program. Alternatively, more than one-third of grantees in both programs did not require any minimum level of reading or mathematics ability. However, three-fourths of grantees in both programs provided this type of instruction to students who were enrolled in the programs.

Reading or math requirement	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Minimum reading level only	4	11	0	0
Minimum math level only	1	3	0	0
Both reading and math level minimums	18	50	7	58
No minimum reading or math requirements	13	36	5	42

Note: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Survey, E2.

The minimum reading and math levels required varied considerably (Exhibit 3-4). Among TechHire programs requiring a minimum reading level, most required 9th grade (eight grantees, 40%) or 10th grade and above (eight grantees, 40%). Among the four programs allowing a less than 9th-grade reading level for participants, two required 8th grade, one required 7th grade, and one required 6th grade. The findings were similar for required math levels for TechHire grantees. Most grantees (eight grantees, 47%) required 9th-grade math levels; five grantees (29%) required 10th grade or higher, and 24 percent required less than 9th grade.

Exhibit 3-4. Minimum reading and math grade levels								
Grade level	Reading				Math			
	TechHire		SWFI		TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6th grade or equivalent	1	5	0	0	1	6	0	0
7th grade or equivalent	1	5	0	0	1	6	0	0
8th grade or equivalent	2	10	1	14	2	12	1	14
9th grade or equivalent	8	40	3	43	8	47	3	43
10th grade or higher	8	40	3	43	5	29	3	43

Note: TechHire N=20 for reading and 17 for math, SWFI N=7 for reading and math.

Source: Grantee Survey, E2a.

About two-thirds or more of grantees in each program also used financial eligibility criteria (Exhibit 3-5). Financial eligibility criteria served two purposes. First, grantees were required to serve individuals with “barriers to training and employment” and low income was seen by grantees as one such barrier. A second purpose was to allow for the co-enrollment of participants in other programs so that the grantee could offer participants more extensive training and supportive services. More than one-third of grantees in both programs required participants to be eligible for WIOA. Co-enrolling participants in WIOA enabled grantees to leverage additional training and supportive services. One grantee used WIOA for trainings that were unavailable in the grant program. Another grantee used WIOA to pay for supportive services once participants had reached the limit on supportive services from the grant.

Exhibit 3-5. Indicators utilized to determine financial eligibility				
Financial eligibility indicator	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Eligible for TANF	5	14	5	38
Eligible for SNAP	8	22	7	54
Eligible for SSI	6	17	4	31
Eligible for WIOA	13	36	5	38
Household income	13	36	8	62
Personal income	12	33	6	46
Personal earnings	6	17	3	23
No financial eligibility criteria	13	36	3	23

Note: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, E3.

Using Pre-training to Assess Participants' Suitability for the Program

LaGuardia Community College, a TechHire grantee, based acceptance decisions on an interview that determined how the applicant talked about technology and their motivation for getting training. They also conducted a second assessment consisting of a 2-week trial period. This pre-training appraisal consisted of full-day (9 am to 5 pm) in-person career exploration and coding instruction. Led by the program's case manager and instructor, these sessions were intended to prepare students for the IT field, and to think about where they saw themselves going within that field. Staff assessed students on attendance, submitting assignments on time, and quality of the homework and in-class assignments. Some students left the program at this point before beginning their official TechHire training. Staff found this 2-week assessment useful in improving program retention.

Source: Grantee interview

In addition to the eligibility criteria discussed above, grantees included screening to determine applicants' suitability for the program. In the survey, about three-fourths of grantees in both programs indicated that they screened applicants for general suitability with the program. The screening assessed applicants' motivation, skills, interest in the program, and personal circumstances that may interfere with training completion. In interviews, five grantees mentioned that they screened potential participants based on existing technology skills. One grantee said that they asked applicants to complete a brief online coding assignment and take a technology skills test to determine suitability. Screening occurred through interviews but also included mandatory workshops to gauge prospective participants' interest. One grantee instituted a mandatory orientation session prior to program enrollment as a way to screen participants for determination and motivation and found that this improved program retention. Another grantee utilized both an interview and a 2-week, full-day pre-training session to assess participants (see box).

Despite the use of screening, the majority of grantees found most applicants to be eligible and suitable for

their programs (Exhibit 3-6). More than half of grantees in both programs found that 90 percent or more of applicants were eligible and suitable for the program. Fewer than 20 percent of grantees found that less than 70 percent of applicants were suitable.

Exhibit 3-6. Percentage of applicants that apply and are not suitable for the program

% Applicants not suitable	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 5 percent (95% suitable)	7	25	2	22
5 to 10 percent	7	25	4	44
11 to 20 percent	7	25	2	22
21 to 30 percent	3	11	0	0
31 to 40 percent	1	4	0	0
41 to 50 percent	1	4	1	11
More than 50 percent	2	7	0	0

Notes: TechHire N=28 and SWFI N=9.

Source: Grantee Survey, E3.

3.2.1 Assessments

Once participants were enrolled in the programs, grantees used a variety of assessments to determine their training and supportive service needs. The comprehensiveness of these assessments varied widely across grantees (Exhibit 3-7). More than half of grantees in both programs assessed career interest, prior education or training, prior work experience, motivation, supportive service needs, job readiness or soft skills, and career aptitude. More than half of TechHire grantees assessed computer skills and coding skills. Only about three-in-ten SWFI grantees assessed computer skills and no SWFI grantees assessed coding skills. However, all SWFI grantees assessed supportive service needs.

Exhibit 3-7. Included assessment areas				
Assessment area	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Career interest	29	81	10	77
Prior education or training	27	75	11	85
Prior work experience	25	69	8	62
Motivation	25	69	9	69
Supportive service needs	24	67	13	100
Job readiness or soft skills	23	64	9	69
Career aptitude	21	58	7	54
Computer skills	19	53	4	31
Coding skills	8	22	0	0
Other	4	11	1	8

Notes: TechHire N=36 and SWFI N=13.

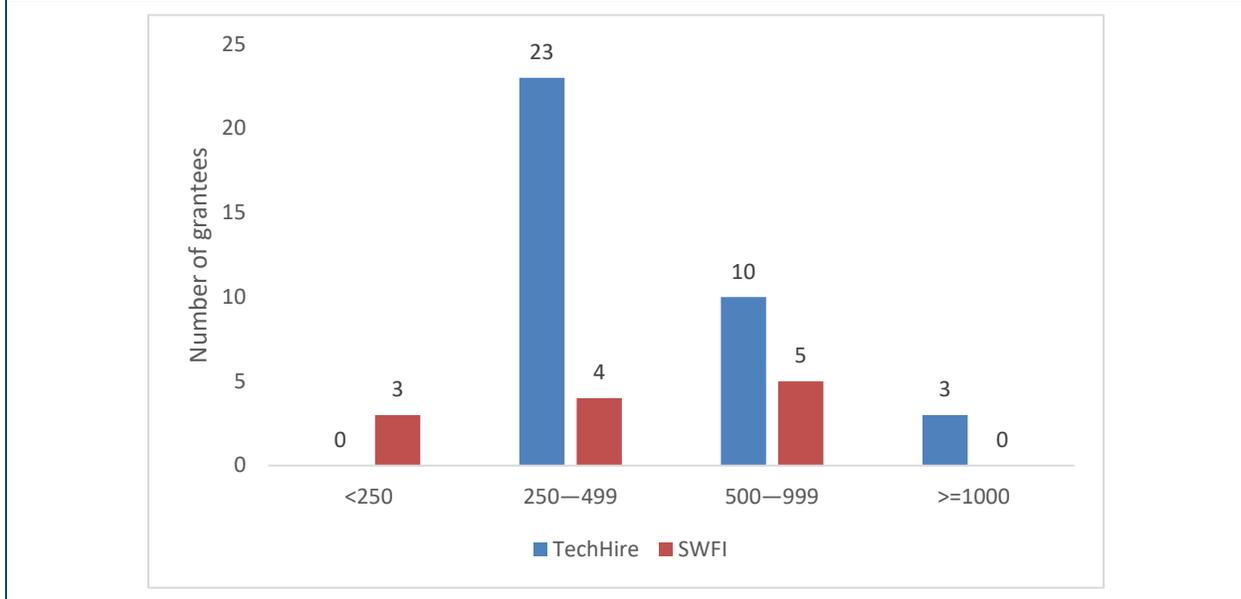
Source: Grantee Survey, E7.

All SWFI grantees and most TechHire grantees used standardized assessment tools (Exhibit A-3). About half of grantees in both programs used the Test of Adult Basic Education and one-quarter used WorkKeys. Other assessment tools used by grantees included ACCUPLACER, COMPASS, and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems.

3.3 Enrollment

As of June 2020, grantees had cumulatively served over 25,000 individuals. “Served” means that an individual received at least one grant-funded service, not necessarily that they enrolled in education or training. As of the time of this report, grantees that received no-cost extensions continued to enroll individuals. As shown in Exhibit 3-8, grantees varied widely in the number of individuals served. Twenty-three TechHire grantees (64%) served 250 to 499 individuals, whereas three grantees (8%) served 1,000 or more individuals.

Exhibit 3-8. Number of individuals served



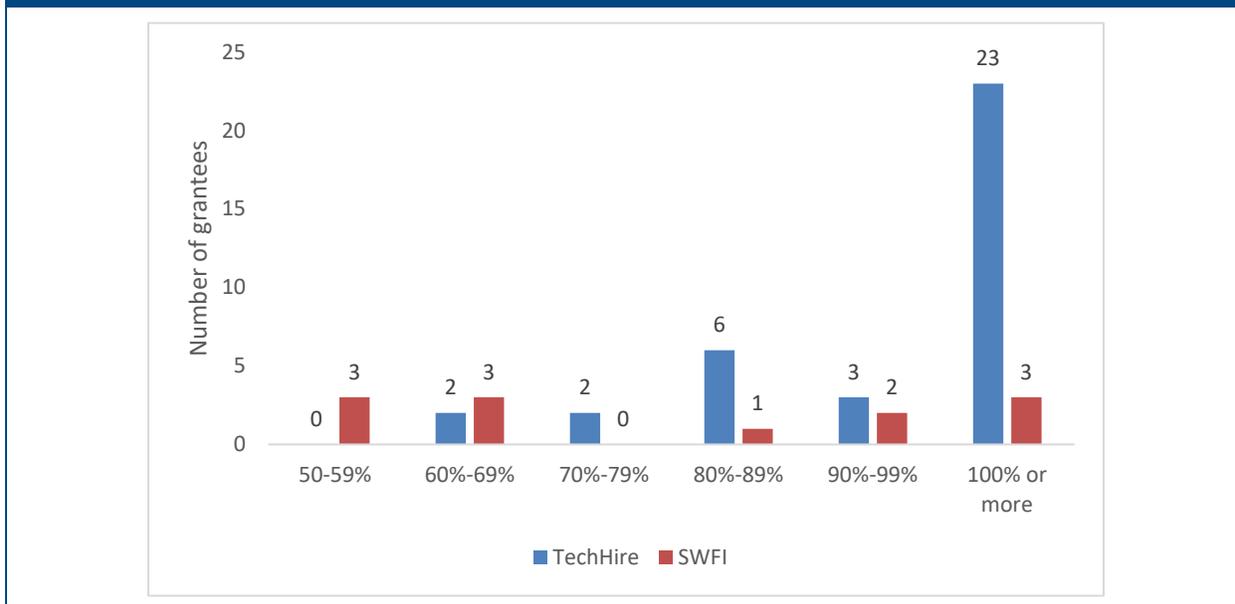
Note: TechHire N=36 and SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Quarterly Progress Reports.

DOL required grantees to set program goals and report progress toward each goal on a quarterly basis. These goals were set by grantees in their grant applications but could subsequently be modified by approval from DOL. One of the program goals was the number of participants served.²² By the end of the fourth year of the grant in June 2020, many grantees had not met their goal for the number of individuals served (Exhibit 3-9). Overall, two-thirds (23) of TechHire grantees and one-quarter (3) of SWFI grantees met their goal for the number of individuals served. As discussed below, this reflects recruitment challenges experienced by grantees. However, because DOL gave no-cost extensions to grantees, some grantees may meet their goal for the number of individuals served in the future.

²² The other outcome measures capture progress toward the number of participants enrolled in and completing training and earning credentials, and employment and earnings. The outcome measures are based on the number of participants who achieved each outcome (e.g., number of individuals who completed training) and differ from the outcome measures presented in this report, which are based on the percentages of participants who achieved each outcome (e.g., percentage of individuals who completed training). Because the outcome measures are based on the numbers of participants, grantees that did not meet their target for number of individuals served were unlikely to meet their targets for other outcomes.

Exhibit 3-9. Percent of enrollment target met by grantees



Note: TechHire N=36 and SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Quarterly Progress Reports.

3.4 Characteristics of Enrolled Participants

The target population for TechHire included youth and young adults with barriers to employment and special populations, including individuals with disability, limited English proficiency, or criminal records. The Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) included data on the characteristics of participants (Appendix Exhibit A-4). TechHire participants were predominantly male (65%). The majority of TechHire participants (73%) were youth ages 17 to 29. Forty-one percent of TechHire participants were White. The modal education category was a high school diploma or GED (51%). Forty-eight percent of participants were low income. More than half (54%) were unemployed at enrollment.

SWFI participants tended to be female (86%), and the majority (54%) were ages 30 to 54. SWFI participants were most likely to be Black (54%) and Hispanic (23%). The vast majority of SWFI participants were low income. This is not surprising given that SWFI grantees were required to have participants who were qualified or pre-qualified for programs such as TANF, SNAP, Head Start, and child care development block grant child care subsidies.

Similar percentages of participants in both programs were unemployed at enrollment (54% of TechHire and 55% of SWFI participants). SWFI grantees had a higher percentage of workers who were underemployed (33% versus 24% for TechHire). TechHire served a higher percentage of

incumbent workers (15% versus 3%).²³ The differences in characteristics of TechHire and SWFI participants follow from the differences in the target populations served by the two programs.

3.5 Challenges Related to Recruitment, Screening, and Enrollment

“Our unemployment rate here is less than 3 percent, which basically means that if you want a job, you will find a job. There are job postings everywhere. If you currently are not working, it probably is because you really just don’t want to be working right now.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Recruitment was one of the major challenges faced by grantees. In interviews, 12 grantees and four partners who were involved in recruitment said that recruitment had been difficult. One reason why recruitment was difficult was the low unemployment rate. The tight labor market meant that potential participants were able to receive similar wages and benefits in occupations that did not require training. Moreover, two grantees said that potential participants who were unemployed often had many barriers to employment that made training completion and employment difficult.

Recruitment of youth and young adults ages 17 to 29 proved especially difficult as mentioned by 16 grantees in interviews. Youth and young adults were seen as generally not interested in making an investment in training, preferring “gig” economy jobs to those in the target industries. The demographics of the areas served by grantees also proved problematic, with three grantees mentioning that the workforce in their states were tilted toward older workers. The availability of other funding sources for training for youth may have also contributed to recruitment difficulties with this group. One grantee said that youth under 25 were difficult to recruit because they could rely on parents or Pell grants to pay for training outside of the program, making free training less appealing. Grantees suggested changes to the program requirements to make it easier to fulfill the target for the number of youth and young adults served. Two grantees suggested that DOL count incumbent workers ages 17 to 29 toward fulfilling the 75 percent target for youth and young adults since incumbent workers were easier to recruit.

“I would not have an age limitation. We get calls every single day from individuals who are over age 29 that are really interested in the program, they’re not eligible because they don’t meet the age requirement. I went back to college when I was 30, so I don’t know that it’s all that uncommon, but the restrictive demographic, I think that’s definitely one of the things I would change.”

—TechHire Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

At the same time that grantees had difficulty recruiting youth and young adults, older individuals were apparently very interested in the training programs. Seven grantees said that they turned away many interested individuals in their 30s and 40s. One grantee indicated that “hundreds” of students not eligible for the program because of age were trained by another grant at the college that did not provide the needed wraparound services. Older participants were seen as more successful in the programs because they were more mature, had more work experience, and were

²³ H-1B grants have a unique definition of incumbent workers. Incumbent workers are individuals who are employed in lower skilled or entry level positions and in need of training to advance to middle- and high-skilled occupations. Grantees partner with the individuals’ current employers to provide training to incumbent workers. Some participants are employed at entry but not considered incumbent workers because they did not receive training provided in partnership with their current employer.

more likely to be hired by employers who were looking for mid-level rather than entry-level workers. Five grantees said that they would like DOL to change the TechHire age limitation to serve participants aged 30 and older.

“What we found out is that the very first year, a lot of people just want to train without thinking through about is this a career. They heard the word free training, child care support and they came to use and said, “Hey, we want to be part of this, but without really thinking about what that career really entailed.”

—TechHire Grantee
Source: Grantee interviews

Finding applicants with the education and skills to complete what was often a demanding training course was another recruitment challenge. Nine grantees (eight in IT) said that applicants lacked the skills necessary to complete the training, and two grantees said that applicants did not understand how difficult it would be to complete IT training. Participants quickly became discouraged, and this contributed to problems with retention, according to these grantees. To overcome these challenges, programs used mandatory orientations, workshops, or pre-trainings to assess participants. One program required participants to do a 5-day bootcamp prior to training to assess technical and soft skills and “a good attitude and willingness to learn.”

Those who did not pass the bootcamp were not invited to start training. Another program instituted a “Two-Day Foundational Skills” program where applicants were given an understanding of what the career entails and their commitment to the program was assessed.

A mismatch between the level of the training and the needs of employers also posed a challenge. Four grantees mentioned that recruitment was a challenge because employers were interested in mid-level workers and that applicants did not have the academic skills to be trained to such a level. One grantee said that they scaled back their IT trainings because, given the educational backgrounds of interested applicants and short duration of the training, the program could not train participants to the level employers considered to be “entry-level.” One strategy that grantees used to overcome this challenge was to recruit participants with higher levels of education. One grantee mentioned recruiting fourth-semester nursing students from a four-semester nursing program. The grantee mentioned that the program had issues with attrition in the fourth semester and that the students had the requisite academic skills and simply required supports. Another grantee mentioned recruiting individuals who already had college degrees for IT training but who were unemployed and lacked a certificate. The grantee was concerned, however, that individuals with college degrees did not meet the definition “youth and young adults with barriers to training and employment” in the funding opportunity announcement.

“TechHire is just not going to be able to build somebody to a bachelor’s degree. So, we focused on manufacturing because really in our County, that’s where a huge need is.”

—Grantee
Source: Grantee interviews

Finally, participants’ barriers also posed a recruitment challenge according to eight grantees. One barrier was transportation when jobs were in rural areas not accessible by public transportation or offered at inconvenient times. One healthcare employer said that the grantee had difficulty finding interested applicants because the jobs required working night shifts and participants lacked transportation at this time. The need for an immediate job was also a challenge as mentioned by four grantees. Participants could not afford to be without a paycheck even for a few weeks to attend training. Participants had difficulty passing background screenings, which made recruitment difficult. One grantee mentioned that a negative drug test was required by the community college and that this was a problem for some applicants. Another grantee that provided training in financial

services mentioned that they backed away from this industry because employers required credit checks and this was problematic given that some participants were unemployed for years.

“I think what we’ve found is it’s not hard to find people who technically fit our grant eligibility and are interested in tech, but a lot of those individuals do need a lot of support before they’re training ready, before they can figure out their life circumstances and jump into an 8-week intensive training.”

—TechHire grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Unfortunately, some participants may have been turned away because the programs could not address the barriers they faced. One grantee said that they turned applicants away because of problems that were “too deep” to be addressed by the program but referred these individuals to other services in the community. While grantees offered few solutions to these challenges, one grantee said that they conducted surveys of applicants who expressed interest online but did not show up for an introduction to the program to understand why they did not show up. This allowed the grantee to better design their training programs to overcome barriers, such as making the classes shorter or offering them at different times and locations.

While rigorous eligibility and screening criteria created recruitment challenges for some grantees, four grantees and seven partners indicated that they believed screening was too lenient and contributed to difficulties with retention.

Finally, four grantees mentioned difficulties recruiting participants to be trained in advanced manufacturing because of negative perceptions about manufacturing or simply a lack of awareness of manufacturing careers. Exposure to careers in advanced manufacturing was one strategy to overcome this challenge. One grantee indicated that they had success recruiting participants into advanced manufacturing training by using “tour days” wherein high school students received tours of advanced manufacturing workplaces and found the machinery to be “cool.” One grantee said that most of the participants in advanced manufacturing training had previously worked in the industry and were familiar with manufacturing careers.

4. Occupational Training

The primary objective of the two grant programs was to provide the education and training needed for individuals with barriers to begin careers in H-1B industries and occupations. The funding opportunity announcement required grantees to provide training in one or more of three customized tracks: coaching and job search assistance (for individuals who already have the requisite skills), shorter term/accelerated training, and longer term training that might end with a formal education credential or a degree. Within these broad approaches to training, grantees could use a mix of traditional and innovative training approaches, including bootcamps and online learning. In this chapter, we examine what differentiates the training funded with the TechHire and SWFI grants from the standard training available to participants, the types of training provided by grantees, the types of credentials provided, the use of career pathways strategies, and challenges and strategies related to training delivery.

Key Chapter Findings

- There was variation in the extent to which the occupational skills training offered by the programs was distinct from existing training programs available outside of TechHire or SWFI. Trainings that were distinct included acceleration, work-based learning, or credentials that were not available outside of TechHire or SWFI. In other cases, the trainings were identical, and supportive services were the defining feature.
- The accelerated trainings did not always equip participants with the hard skills needed for employment. At the same time, some participants could not complete longer trainings due to participants' need for immediate employment.
- Staffing shortages, both in terms of training instructors and grant management staff, presented the most common programmatic challenge to implementation. Grantees devised inventive solutions to recruit instructors, including recruiting industry retirees, offering professional development opportunities to faculty who agree to teach a class, and hiring new, dedicated instructors rather than relying on existing faculty who teach other courses.
- Financial strain and participants' need for immediate employment were most commonly cited by grantees as participant obstacles to completing training. Difficulty passing exams and obtain certifications/licensures needed to work in the target occupations was also a challenge.

4.1 Distinctiveness of the Occupational Skills Training

All grantees were, or had partners who were, experienced training providers with existing training programs. The grantee interviews suggest that there was variation in the extent to which the occupational skills training offered by the programs was distinct from existing training programs available outside of TechHire or SWFI. Eighteen grantees said that the occupational skills training they provided under the grant was distinct from existing training programs. In these cases, the distinctive features of the training programs included acceleration, work-based learning, and/or certifications, among other characteristics. One grantee converted a 2-year advanced manufacturing training into an 11-week training program, which was not available to the general public. Another grantee offered Microsoft C++ certification, which was not offered to other students at the college due to the high cost. In contrast, 14 grantees said that the occupational skills training was the same or similar to existing training programs. TechHire and SWFI participants in these 14 programs often attended the training in a “blended” classroom with other participants who were not enrolled in the TechHire or SWFI grant programs. The distinguishing feature of the TechHire and SWFI training programs in these cases was the availability of supportive and wraparound

“Well, for IT, our school, although we have some embedded certifications, the ones that TechHire is supporting are generally not those that are offered to students because there’s a significant cost associated with them. So the fact that they can now have access to some of these certifications and not become a financial issue for them, has been a plus....[Without TechHire], they would have to do those certifications on their own or have a company pay for them or that kind of situation.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

services. One grantee provided a career navigator and job developer to TechHire participants, who were not available to other participants in the same training programs. Another grantee incorporated mandatory soft skills classes and refresher and remedial training to prepare participants for certification. These courses were required for TechHire participants but optional for other participants in the same training programs. Another approach combined wraparound services to make existing training programs more flexible for participants. One grantee offered an advanced manufacturing training online and included an embedded math tutor. While participants outside of TechHire could take this training, for non-TechHire participants it had to be done in-person and did not include a tutor. Another grantee offered case management and flex scheduling to accommodate work schedules to TechHire participants only.

4.2 Types of Trainings Offered

TechHire and SWFI grantees expected some enrollees to need basic skills training before they were ready to enter one of the main vocational training tracks. According to the grantee survey (Appendix Exhibit A-5) three-quarters of grantees offered basic skills training. There were three different approaches to basic skills training offered by grantees: basic skills training integrated into the training classes, basic skills training provided independently of the training classes by the grantee directly, and basic skills training provided independently of the training classes provided by partners. Each of these strategies was used by about one-fourth of grantees. For example, one grantee incorporated basic skills within existing training classes, while one grantee offered a bridge program to prepare participants for college-level courses; still another grantee provided participants needing additional academic support a 2-week series of Contextualized Learning Workshops administered by a training partner.

As we noted above, the funding opportunity announcement required grantees to provide training in three customized tracks: coaching and job search assistance (for individuals who already have the requisite skills), shorter term/accelerated training, or longer term training that might end with a formal education credential or a degree. Within these broad approaches to training, grantees could use a mix of traditional and innovative training approaches, including bootcamps and online learning. Grantees offered several different training strategies (Exhibit 4-1). Classroom occupational training was one of the most common training strategies, offered by 29 TechHire grantees (81%) and 12 of 13 SWFI grantees (92%). TechHire grantees were more likely to use nontraditional training approaches than SWFI grantees. Accelerated training and distance learning were offered by 72 and 56 percent of TechHire grantees, respectively, but only 23 and 39 percent of SWFI grantees. TechHire grantees were more likely to provide incumbent worker training than SWFI grantees (86% versus 39%). The majority of grantees in both programs offered some type of work-based learning—92 percent of TechHire grantees and 88 percent of SWFI grantees offered either on-the-job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, or paid work experience.

Training Tracks

Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.'s TechHire program included three customized training tracks in IT. Track 1 (Rapid Employment) was targeted to participants who needed job coaching or an industry-specific credential and included internships, OJT, and individualized training accounts. Track 2 (Essentials Bootcamp) was for individuals who lacked the IT skills needed for a paid internship, OJT, or direct hire. Track 3 (Longer term, intensive training) was for participants who needed the most intensive services, such as English language learners, youth with no or limited work history, or those who faced other barriers. It included classroom and basic skills instruction and paid work experience to gain work readiness skills.

Source: Grantee interviews

Exhibit 4-1. Types of training offered

Type of training offered	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Incumbent worker training	31	86	5	39
Classroom occupational training	29	81	12	92
Accelerated training (e.g., bootcamps)	26	72	3	23
Paid internship	23	64	1	8
On-the-job training	22	61	8	62
Distance learning and technology-based training	20	56	5	39
Paid work experience	16	44	4	31
Registered Apprenticeship	10	28	2	15
Competency-based training	9	25	4	31

Notes: N=36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey.

4.2.1 Classroom-Based Occupational Training

The grantee and partner interviews provided insight into how grantees implemented each type of training they offered. Classroom-based trainings resembled traditional educational classes, wherein an instructor utilizes in-person instruction, homework, and hands-on learning opportunities (when appropriate) to facilitate learning. One grantee utilized a unique style that they called a “flipped classroom” model, where students read the training material at home and then attended in-person classes to write papers and complete math assignments. This allowed participants to work at their own pace while utilizing classroom time to get help from instructors and collaborate with other participants.

4.2.2 Accelerated Training

Bootcamp Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Web development• Programming (e.g., Java, .NET, etc.)• Mechatronics• Digital marketing• Digital media• Introduction to nursing• Industrial mechanics• Broadband• Mathematics• Software development• Health IT• Cyber security
Source: Grantee interviews

Accelerated training or bootcamps were typically fast-paced, short-term (i.e., 2 weeks to 6 months) programs that were offered by a training provider multiple times each year. Training providers and grantees described the programs as conducted using intense, all-day training sessions. Bootcamps operated during the daytime, but also offered evening and/or weekend training opportunities. Depending on the target industry, completion of a boot camp provided participants with an industry-specific credential or prepared them for a test that would yield a specific certification.

The content and mode of each boot camp varied with the subject matter. For example, one boot camp in advanced manufacturing that taught students how to use machines was described as “95 percent hands-on.” The remainder of the boot camp consisted of mathematics and reading

assignments. Conversely, an IT boot camp offered by another grantee adopted a hybrid model that primarily offered training online, but supplemented it with in-person sessions so that instructors could assess how well students grasped the material and whether they were adequately prepared for a certification exam.

Boot camps were also seen as a useful training tool for building soft skills. Two grantees and one training provider indicated that boot camps helped cultivate workplace readiness simply by forcing participants to arrive on time and be accountable in a professional environment. The training provider added that, after being taught the foundations of software development, each boot camp cohort was asked to work as a team to build software programs. That experience taught participants how to work as part of a team; a skill which was highly valued by employers who hired program graduates. At the end of the training program, the training provider convened a roundtable of local IT employers, and students presented their projects to them.

“Well, maybe an extra 4 weeks would not be a bad idea. Six months would be terrific. Twelve weeks, I mean, you can make an informed decision. Sixteen weeks you can make a better decision. And some of those that didn’t make it through, if it were longer, they would’ve had a little more time to adjust and to grow and to develop. And then that could’ve been the difference between them not working or working here after the internship.”

—Employer

Source: Partner interviews

“Most [participants] got a job before the end of the class...When you’re in a position of being unemployed and you’re looking for work, 4 weeks is a long time to go with no income.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Challenges. In interviews, six grantees and one employer spoke about the problems they saw with the boot camp model of training. Accelerated training was seen as not equipping participants with the hard skills needed to obtain employment. One grantee called boot camps *“the diet pill model of losing weight,”* saying it is not a solution for long-term skill building. An employer in the advanced manufacturing industry suggested that the training participants received through the boot camps was *“basic,”* and that they would have liked to see graduates leave the program with more skills. Two employers said they would like the training to be longer, and one employer felt longer training could make the difference between getting a job or not with their company. One grantee reported that it is difficult to train participants in the 25 core skills required in preparation for the certified nurse assistant (CNA) exam in an accelerated training course.

In addition, three grantees spoke about the struggle of retaining participants for the duration of the boot camp, despite its accelerated nature. Some participants want a quick path to employment and lack the financial security to remain outside the workforce while completing even a relatively short training program. One employer partner said they wanted the boot camps extended from 4 to 8 weeks to give participants more time to acquire skills, but noted that attendance starts to lag after the first couple

weeks due to transportation issues and other challenges that arise. One training provider noticed that retention was low in a 4-week training class. As a result, the grantee made it a 2-week training, and they attributed an increase in retention to that change.

4.2.3 Work-Based Training

Overall, 88 percent of grantees offered some type of work-based learning and training experience, such as apprenticeships, OJT, and internships. Typically, the program staff contacted local employers to gauge their interest in hosting participants interested in a career in the employer’s industry, and their ability to provide training and supervision as that participant gained work experience. Once on board, the employer would be sent potential candidates, and they would select someone and extend an offer for a work-based training position. Participants were supervised by the employer staff, and the hours worked varied by employer. Work-based training positions were paid (*“earn and learn”*), while classroom-based and remote trainings were typically unpaid. In OJT programs, the cost of participants’ wages was divided between the grantees and employers, with grantees reimbursing between 50 and 90 percent of participants’ wages.²⁴

²⁴ The Funding Opportunity Announcement required grantees to reimburse participants’ wages as follows: up to 90 percent of the participant’s wage rate for employers with 50 or fewer employees; up to 75 percent of the participant’s wage rate for employers with 51-250 employees; and up to 50 percent for employers with more than 250 employees.

“Having that open lab concept is really beneficial for students...you can come in any time between 7:00 in the morning and 10:00 at night, and there will be an instructor there. You can do your online bookwork, and then you can go into the lab. You can work at the same time. You can fit your schedule around it.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

The responsibilities of participants in work-based training varied by employers’ needs and the participants’ skills, but typically began with an introduction to the work culture and administration (e.g., human resources, supervision and communication, performance assessments, etc.) followed by job-specific tasks and projects. One employer that hired TechHire IT interns said that their responsibilities ranged from data entry to hardware troubleshooting to collaborating on client requests: *“We had a client of ours, we did a kind of a hardware refresh, so we replaced older equipment with 15 new computers. So we had an intern here with us at the time who helped us with that process, working collaboratively with myself and my full-time staff.”*

Work-based learning could also lead to full-time employment after the training period was complete. One employer that provided internships to SWFI participants noted that their goal for the program was to hire interns after the end of their internship. In order to ensure that the SWFI intern candidate was the right fit, that same employer incorporated a job shadowing component into their interview process to give the candidate greater insight into the work done at the company and help them decide if it was a job they wanted.

Required Internships

Participants in Pellissippi State’s IT training programs had to complete an internship in order to graduate. The internship requirement was built into the training curriculum and provided valuable work experience, according to the grantee. An unexpected benefit was that it led participants to ask for guidance on job search strategies and interviewing skills as they tried to identify and obtain an internship. The grantee perceived that this work experience made it easier for participants in their IT trainings to secure employment after graduation compared with participants in their other training programs that did not require an internship.

Source: Grantee interviews

4.2.4 Distance Learning and Technology-Based Training

During interviews, 14 grantees provided more details about their online training programs, saying that online training brought training opportunities to participants in more remote areas and to those who wanted more adaptable training schedules (i.e., they wanted flexibility to watch live or pre-recorded lessons at night or on weekends). Four of the 14 grantees that spoke about their distance training options in interviews said they offered online-only programs, while the remaining 10 offered a hybrid learning environment that combined online and in-person instruction. One of the grantees employing a hybrid model said that they chose it out of necessity; their teaching staff had no availability to lead an in-person class. As a workaround, they engaged a faculty member to lead an online class, and engaged a separate instructor to provide weekly hands-on IT training (e.g., disassembling and reassembling computers) in a lab setting. One TechHire grantee commented that having participants attend an in-person class or lab once a week worked well for those working part- or full-time and need to schedule training around their work commitments. One grantee launched a loaner laptop program to assist students who did not have access to a computer at home.

“They’ve had some incumbent workers be trained, because the employers, at this low unemployment rate, are very willing to upskill their current, entry-level folks up to higher levels to get a better position and more technical skills, which provides more value to the company.”

—Incumbent worker training provider

Source: Partner interviews

Challenges. Three grantees expressed multiple concerns with the effectiveness of online learning. Two of these grantees said that they felt that the independent nature of learning online was not a good fit for low-income students and that competing priorities often took precedence when classes were online. These grantees indicated that intensive case management and supports were needed if online learning was to be used. Similarly two of these grantees mentioned that online learning was incompatible with the occupations in which participants were interested. One said that some aspects of healthcare occupations needed to be taught in person, while the other grantee noted that a

training in advanced manufacturing received low interest on the part of students because it lacked a hands-on component that students desired. Finally, one of the three grantees noted that it was difficult to monitor student progress and skills when trying to obtain a needed credential through online training. In response to these concerns, one grantee moved its training from online to in-person in response to low online completion rates, while another attributed their own low completion rates to lack of participant computer skills. In QNRs for 2020 Q4, three additional grantees expressed concerns about transitioning from in-person to distance learning due to the coronavirus pandemic.

4.2.5 Incumbent Worker Training

“The experience of working with an online-based IT training provider has afforded useful lessons. This type of hands-off, independent learning does not suit many people and is especially difficult for low-income parents. As life issues arise, training can become less of a priority when it is based online and requires participants to manage their time and study on their own. We have learned that online training models must be bolstered by more intensive case management and supports. This will guide our approach with IT training participants in the future.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Up to 25 percent of participants in both grant programs could be incumbent workers. The trainings offered to this population were designed to upgrade skills so workers can advance at their current job or transition to a new job with higher wages. Grantees partnered with specific employers to recruit and train their incumbent workers. In interviews, two grantees, one workforce partner and one training provider, reported that employers were eager for the opportunity to obtain training for their staff. Three TechHire grantees cited the low national unemployment rate in late 2019 as a reason why companies that struggled to identify new talent were interested in opportunities to upskill their current employees and backfill job openings. Two grantees recruited incumbent workers more generally into their programs (i.e., they did not target incumbent workers from specific employers). One grantee said that when their attempts to develop an incumbent worker training program with an employer dissolved, they were approached by individual workers at that company to enroll in trainings

that could help them advance. Another said that CNAs frequently sought out training through SWFI when they wanted to leave one job and move into a higher position elsewhere. In both cases, the focus of the training is still on helping workers gain skills needed to advance in their career.

Challenges. Two TechHire grantees and one SWFI grantee said it was difficult to persuade employers to promote incumbent workers or increase incumbent workers’ wages, noting that employers did not want to make promises to do so. One said that this lack of commitment from employers was the reason they discontinued their incumbent worker program; they did not want

participants to complete the training without being rewarded in some way for their new skills and value to their employers. Two grantees said they encountered challenges persuading employers to give their employees time away from their regular responsibilities to attend training.

4.3 Credentials

As with other aspects of training, the credentials that could be earned by participants varied across grantees. The funding opportunity announcement encouraged grantees to provide industry-recognized credentials and degrees in the desired field. As discussed, short-term trainings may or may not result in a credential, whereas long-term trainings were designed to lead to a credential. The grantee survey asked about the types of credentials that could be earned by participants (Exhibit 4-2). All grantees offered industry-recognized credentials or certifications. Participants were also able to earn college credits, with about half of grantees offering associate degrees. Few grantees offered bachelor’s degrees.

Exhibit 4-2. Credential offered				
Credential offered	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Industry recognized/specific certification	36	100	13	100
Associate degree	17	47	7	54
High school diploma/GED	5	14	4	31
Bachelor’s degree	3	8	2	15
Competency-based training	9	25	4	31

Notes: Exhibit includes 36 TechHire and 13 SWFI grantees.

Source: Grantee Survey.

4.4 Career Pathways

Grantees built their approach to training around one or more specific career pathways within their target industries. According to the survey, more than 80 percent of grantees in both programs offered training along a career pathway and about two-thirds offered multiple entry and exit points to accommodate participants with different skill levels (Appendix Exhibit A-6). Most TechHire and SWFI grantees also offered portable or stackable credentials, at 89 percent and 69 percent of grantees, respectively. “Stackable” credentials allow participants to partake in more than one training to build a portfolio of skills along a career pathway. Two grantees said that they believed that the greatest success of their programs was exposing low-income youth to career pathways in industries and occupations that they would never have considered without the program.

Despite the focus on career pathways, two grantees experienced challenges developing training programs that create career pathways in IT. One grantee commented that the idea of a “career pathway” is not as established or clearly defined in the IT industry as it is in healthcare and advanced manufacturing. They felt this made it difficult for their participants to visualize a career in IT and enroll in trainings. Because the field is so broad, participants do not know what they want to do or where training will lead. While this reflects the experience of one grantee, it suggests that the lack of understanding of the IT industry is a barrier to employment in the field. To overcome that challenge, this grantee established a “Two-Day Foundational Skills” program where participants are introduced to the industry in which they want to receive training. All participants must complete

this 2-day program before enrolling in training, and this has increased program retention because students are making more informed decisions about what training is of most interest to them.

Career Pathways in Action

Everett Community College, a TechHire grantee, is offering a series of modularized trainings in Mechatronics. As participants complete trainings, they earn stackable credentials and move along a career pathway that eventually results in an associate degree. Participants can stop training and look for employment at any point along the path. Those that gain a job and then decide they need more training can also return and continue with the next training.

Midlands Technical College’s TechHire program consists of a series of five interconnected bootcamps: three networking bootcamps and two programming bootcamps. Each bootcamp is 6 to 8 weeks in length and results in a different certification. Depending on their target occupation and career pathway, participants can earn one or more certifications to give themselves the required skills.

The City of Phoenix’s TechHire program seeks to train Maricopa County parents for careers in healthcare, IT, and business services. All of the occupations stack into a career pathway. For example, Nursing Assistants can achieve Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and Registered Nurse (RN) positions with additional education. Many students pursue Nurse Assisting to secure employment while they continue pursuing more advanced nursing levels. Medical Assisting often leads students into various Medical Technician positions, including EKG Technician or Dialysis Technician, and then onto various Allied Health fields or additional training to lead to the LPN/RN pathway.

Source: Grantee interviews

4.5 Challenges and Strategies Related to Training

According to the grantee survey, the most frequently cited challenges to implementing training for TechHire grantees included having enough qualified faculty or instructors (cited by 46% of TechHire grantees), retention of participants in the training programs (43%), having the proper training facilities or equipment (26%), and finding appropriate curriculum (17%) (Exhibit 4-3). The most frequently cited challenges were similar among SWFI grantees.

Exhibit 4-3. Major or moderate challenges to implementing training programs				
Training challenge	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Having enough qualified faculty or instructors	16	46	3	27
Retention of participants in the training programs	15	43	5	42
Having the proper training facilities or equipment	9	26	2	15
Finding appropriate curriculum	6	17	3	23

Notes: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey.

The grantee interviews provided further insight into these challenges. Fourteen grantees explained that their staffing issues consisted primarily of not being able to secure sufficient instructors. Staffing issues also extended to the grant program management staff. Three grantees indicated during interviews that they felt their own management team was short-staffed, a sentiment which was echoed by at least one dozen other grantees in the QNRs.²⁵ One grantee made the observation that the plentiful job opportunities and low unemployment made it hard to retain staff, saying, “the job market is so tight that staff are encountering professional opportunities that may not have been available to them a couple of years ago.”

The lack of instructors combined with the lack of sufficient training facilities and equipment reported by 11 grantees point to a larger competition for resources. TechHire and SWFI participants only comprised a portion of the total population served by the colleges, universities, and training providers involved in these grant programs, who continued providing standard training to non-grant participants. Increases in enrollment due to the TechHire and SWFI programs was not matched by a similar increase in classroom space and instructors at those institutions. As a result, the TechHire and SWFI programs competed with other classes and programs for resources. One grantee described it this way: *“We don’t have a dedicated instructor that we could always guarantee availability to start a class or to run a class. And depending on teacher load [among regular faculty] some of them are 9-month employees.”* Another grantee noted that they can usually resolve either the space issue or the staff issue but not both. Grantees dealt with staffing problems in a number of ways. Most creatively, one grantee contacted industry professionals who had recently retired to recruit them into teaching, while another grantee found that offering professional development opportunities to current faculty at local college and universities could improve staff recruitment and retention.

Strategies to Overcome Instructor Shortages

- Survey industry partners to identify people who have recently retired and might be interested in a part-time teaching position.
- Offer professional development opportunities to current faculty who agree to serve as instructors (e.g., offer to subsidize conference attendance).
- Hire a dedicated instructor for training programs, rather than relying on existing faculty who teach other courses.

Source: Grantee interviews

²⁵ Vague descriptions in the QNRs meant we could not determine whether some staffing issues listed pertained to training instructors or grant management staff.

After staffing, participant retention was the most frequently cited challenge. Over 40 percent of both TechHire and SWFI grantees found it difficult to retain participants in training programs. Participant retention was related to both participants' lack of basic skills and personal barriers. Twelve grantees spoke in interviews about the difficulty of identifying and recruiting applicants who possessed the basic skills required to be successful in the training programs. They observed that some participants struggled academically with the training material, and a portion of those ultimately dropped out because they were doing poorly in classes. To overcome these challenges, grantees added basic skills instructions to their offered training (see box). Perhaps related to the academic struggles is the lack of interest and/or motivation observed among certain participants, noted by 11 TechHire grantees and one partner during interviews. They remarked that some participants began a training program only to realize later that their chosen career path was not the right fit or the material was too difficult. One strategy to overcome this challenge was to develop introductory workshops to familiarize applicants with an industry, career path, training programs, and job opportunities so that they could be sure that their desired career path was truly the right fit. For example, one grantee developed a week-long workshop that focused on personal and professional development and career planning. Participants were required to complete handouts on their work habits and career plan, which were used by program staff to match participants to training programs. The grantee believed that this approach increased retention.

All but four grantees identified participant barriers that prevented participants from completing training. Twenty-two grantees cited participant need for immediate employment as a challenge to training completion. Not all participants had the financial flexibility to step away from the workforce for a weeks- or months-long training program. Sixteen grantees said that dependent care responsibilities hindered participants' ability to complete training programs. In particular, while one of SWFI's goals is to help participants overcome child care challenges, three grantees said during interviews that dependent care remained an issue for their participants. Grantees cited two reasons for this: (1) they could only offer child care when a participant was actually in training rather than for all of the hours that the individual actually needed child care; and (2) the care issues that participants struggled with pertained not only to children but also to other types of dependents (e.g., elderly parents). Finally, grantees reported in the survey that participants dropped out of trainings due to a lack of stable

Addition of basic skills curriculum to boost training completion rates

City of Phoenix, a SWFI grantee, worked with a local college to create a 2-week preparatory course for participants training to become Certified Nursing Assistants, which provided an introduction to medical terminology, health assessments, CPR, and immunizations. They developed this course to introduce participants to the healthcare profession and re-introduce them to learning in a formal setting.

Testing for IT certifications can be difficult, so Midlands Technical College, a TechHire grantee, created additional remedial courses to assist students that were struggling to pass their tests or were too scared to register to take a test for fear of failing. They offered workshops, study sessions, and even practice sessions for students who experience testing anxiety. Additionally, they changed their messaging to acknowledge that certification testing is hard and to offer support, saying, "It's okay if you don't pass it the first time. There's plenty of people that don't. We have ways of helping you through that process."

James Sprunt Community College (JSCC), a TechHire grantee, redesigned its adult high school programs, where participants work to obtain their GED, from self-paced to classroom-based. Originally, students were self-paced and took the GED when they felt ready. JSCC realized that students could not progress in a healthcare career without a GED, and began providing more classroom-based learning to better prepare students to test and obtain that credential. Graduation rates tripled in the program following the change.

Source: Grantee interviews

transportation (10 grantees) and/or housing (4 grantees). Transportation challenges included a lack of access to a personal vehicle as well as to public transportation. In fact, public transportation did not exist in some areas where training programs operated, which left participants with few options. Four grantees said some participants were homeless, and ultimately dropped out because they could not secure stable housing. Unfortunately, housing is a difficult issue to resolve, though one grantee offered financial assistance with rent and utility payments when needed. Other barriers mentioned by grantees included domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal activity, and a lack of internet access (8 grantees). One grantee addressed the problem of participant retention successfully by requiring all participants to sign a contract at the beginning of the semester that required four face-to-face touchpoints with participants during the course. As a result, the grantee found an increase in training completion and certificate completion.

Increasing Program Completion

North Central Texas College’s TechHire program uses several strategies to boost program completion including a college transition course, peer support, and a mentoring program called InsideTrack. The transition course includes panel discussions with other students about how they overcame barriers. Alumni and upper level students provide “rules of the game” for navigating the college’s middle-class culture. Finally, InsideTrack provides coaching and mentoring to participants to prevent them from dropping out. The grantee conducted an evaluation of its coaching and found that students of certified coaches were more likely to earn a certificate and/or Associate degree. Moreover, the grantee reported that many students said that the coaching was the greatest benefit of the program.

Source: Grantee interviews

Three grantees mentioned challenges related to training curriculum. One grantee indicated that externally developed curriculum by a training partner could not be used by a community college, which preferred to develop its own curriculum approved by the State Department of Higher Education. Another grantee noted that the existing curriculum for certain credentials took too long to complete and piloted its own curriculum enhancement to shorten the training time and increase test scores and credential rates.

Finally, in interviews, 12 grantees mentioned challenges related to participants’ ability to sit for and pass exams, including five grantees specifically citing participants’ difficulty in passing certification and/or licensure exams. Two

“And they don’t understand that just because you can take a certification class does not mean, A. You are going to pass that class, and B. That you’re going to know enough. You can’t really walk in to most IT companies and say, ‘Hey I just passed my A+ class. I know you have a job for this, I’m ready to get it.’”

Source: Grantee interviews

of these grantees mentioned that participants did not understand that in the healthcare field they needed to pass a licensure exam to work in the occupation for which they were trained—that completing the training and getting the certificate of completion was insufficient. One grantee mentioned that participants who completed the LPN

training and received a certificate had to work as CNAs until they were able to pass their licensure exam. Two grantees mentioned that the compressed nature of the training courses left little time for participants to study for the exam outside of the course. One grantee mentioned that the problem was not so much students passing the exam but rather sitting for the exam in the first place given a time lag between training and the exam. To overcome these challenges, grantees tried several solutions that they believed were successful. Two grantees provided testing at the same location as the training classes—one by encouraging the training provider to offer the test as well. They believed that this reduced drop-off between completion of training and sitting for the exam. Two grantees mentioned offering exam prep classes, and one grantee provided study groups. Finally, rather than offering the training straight through, one grantee split the training course into

two courses and had participants take the relevant part of the exam after each class. They believed that this strategy led to an increase in the number of participants passing the exam. Another grantee provided mentors from previous cohorts, on-site exam prep, and transportation and study materials for exam review sessions. They believed these additional services increased exam pass rates. Another grantee made a tutor available to students in IT training and noted an increase in completion from 20 percent to 50 percent of participants.

5. Supportive Services

The TechHire and SWFI programs targeted individuals with barriers to employment and training, and a key component of each program was an array of supportive services designed to help participants overcome those barriers. Up to 10 percent of grant funds could be used to provide supportive services. Supportive services could include, but were not limited to, transportation, child care, and housing. Grantees could establish limits on the provision of supportive services and were encouraged to leverage other funds. This chapter describes the types of supportive services offered, how the services were provided and funded, and challenges and strategies reported by grantees related to supportive services.

Key Chapter Findings

- Half of grantees used a case management approach to assess and deliver supportive services to participants. Case managers worked with participants throughout their training and in some cases after participants obtained a job.
- Grantees provided a wide array of supportive services, with more specialized services provided by partners.
- Most grantees put limits on the amount of supportive services that participants could receive in order to distribute these services more widely, but the result of these limits was sometimes seen as hurting participants' ability to engage with the program since the limits resulted in inadequate provision of needed services. While grantees agreed that supportive services provided by the grants helped participants to complete training, grantees indicated that several supportive services, including transportation, child care, and housing, were less than adequate to meet participants' needs.
- Challenges to the provision of supportive services included disagreement among program staff about how to fairly allocate supportive service funds, the availability of supportive services (such as transportation and mental healthcare) in the community, and the need for transportation to maintain employment.

5.1 Case Management

Participants' needs for support services were determined during the intake screening process and/or when the participants identified a need and requested assistance from program staff. Twenty-three grantees provided a case manager to participants. Case managers assessed participants upon enrollment and helped place them in training and connect them with supportive services. Case managers' responsibilities varied across programs but could include assessing participants' skills and aptitudes; developing an individualized career and/or training plan with the participant; identifying and navigating the appropriate training track with the participant; and connecting participants with needed supports (e.g., tutoring, transportation assistance).

A Team-Based Case Management Approach

Jobs for the Future, a TechHire grantee, provided comprehensive case management to participants using a team-based approach. Participants met weekly with different “coaches” to talk about both academic and nonacademic issues, and these coaches collaborated behind the scenes to coordinate the support provided. Slack®, a software tool that facilitates team communication, was used to create open dialogue between all training instructors and support coaches. They used it to make sure that everyone was aware of any issues that a particular participant faced (e.g., academic struggles, life challenges, etc.). “That worked really well,” said the grantee, because it ensured that everyone knew what was happening with participants, and that they could decide as a group who was the best person to contact a student and provide support.

Source: Grantee interviews

Case managers typically worked with participants throughout the duration of their training. The connection with a case manager typically began at intake with the development of an individualized service plan that listed long-term and short-term goals and any barriers a participant might face to completing training and obtaining employment. From there, the case manager would help connect participants to supportive services to mitigate those barriers and help them determine the appropriate training track. Throughout the participant’s involvement in the training program, the case manager would check in periodically with them via email, telephone, and in-person meetings to monitor their progress and need for services.

The relationship with the case manager was not necessarily tied to training attendance. One grantee said that participants continued to have access to case management services even if they needed to temporarily pause their training. The hope was that continuing to offer support to participants while they grappled with challenging life circumstances would enable them to resume their training later. Another grantee said participants had access to a case manager for at least 2 years after they completed training. Case managers were also available to provide support to participants in their jobs, as mentioned by five grantees. One grantee reported that employers reached out if a participant was regularly tardy for work or lacked soft skills, and the case manager would meet with the participant to understand the situation and offer support. Another grantee said that participants reported that case management was the most valuable aspect of the training program.

5.2 Supportive Services Offered

Grantees offered a wide range of supportive services to help participants complete training and obtain employment (Exhibit 5-1). The most common service offered by TechHire grantees was coaching and mentoring (94%). Other services offered by more than 80 percent of TechHire grantees included child care, transportation, emergency assistance, food assistance, work-related supplies, peer support, and mental health assistance. As a group, SWFI grantees were more likely to offer supportive services than TechHire grantees, except for peer support. All SWFI grantees provided assistance with child care (as required), coaching, transportation, emergency assistance, food assistance, mental health, housing, and financial counseling.

Our Mission

“We know that life happens. So they can be in the middle of a training, everything was great, something happens, they still have access to that career coach or navigator that’s going to help provide them with some kind of resource to help them.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Exhibit 5-1. Support services offered

Support service offered	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Coaching and/or mentoring	32	94	13	100
Child care	30	86	13	100
Transportation	31	89	13	100
Emergency assistance	31	86	13	100
Food assistance (other than SNAP)	31	86	13	100
Work-related supplies and expenses (uniforms, tools, licensing fees)	31	89	12	92
Peer support	30	86	11	85
Mental health assistance	29	83	13	100
Housing	28	78	13	100
Financial counseling	28	78	13	100
Medical Care	27	77	12	92
Legal assistance	23	64	12	92

Notes: TechHire N=34-36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey.

Supportive services were provided not just by the grantees but also by partner organizations. For each supportive service that a grantee said they provided, the grantee survey asked whether the service was provided directly, by referral, or both directly and by referral. Grantees provided few supportive services by themselves without partner assistance (Exhibit 5-2). The services most likely to be provided directly by TechHire grantees included coaching or mentoring (97%), work-related supplies and expenses (84%), transportation (71%), and peer support (70%).²⁶ The services most likely to be offered by referral were more specialized services such as medical care (96%), mental health assistance (90%), legal assistance (87%), housing (82%), and food assistance (81%). No grantees provided these services directly only.

Data from the PIRL contains information on whether supportive services and case management were delivered to participants, not just offered. According to this data, 28 percent of TechHire and 78 percent of SWFI participants received supportive services. It is uncertain why not all SWFI participants received supportive services given that the target population was low-skilled parents in need of child care. Case management was nearly universal in both programs—with 90 percent of TechHire and 95 percent of SWFI participants receiving this service. Unfortunately, the PIRL does not provide details on the specific type of supportive services received, such as transportation, child care or housing, or the intensity of these services.

As discussed, grantees used grant funds to provide wraparound services to enrolled participants. The evaluation’s impact component includes a survey that collects information on the type of supportive services received by both the program and control groups 18 months after random assignment. A future report will analyze this information to determine the extent to which participants received specific types of services and whether participants received more supportive services than the control group.

²⁶ The percentage of grantees that provided each service directly includes those that provided each service directly as well as those that provided it both directly and by referral.

Exhibit 5-2. Support services offered, by mode of delivery

Support service offered	TechHire			SWFI		
	Provides directly	Makes referrals	Both	Provides directly	Makes referrals	Both
Coaching and/or mentoring	63	3	34	54	8	38
Peer support	47	30	23	45	18	36
Transportation	32	29	39	46	15	38
Work-related supplies and expenses (uniforms, tools, licensing fees)	32	16	52	38	54	8
Child care	13	67	20	33	17	50
Financial counseling	7	68	25	15	38	46
Emergency assistance	3	58	39	15	46	38
Food assistance (other than SNAP)	0	81	19	0	69	31
Mental health assistance	0	90	10	0	77	23
Housing	0	82	18	0	69	31
Medical Care	0	96	4	77	15	8
Legal assistance	0	87	13	0	10	0

Notes: TechHire N=23-32 TechHire, SWFI N=11-13. The percentages indicate, among grantees that provided each service, the percentage that provided it directly, by referral, or both. Percentages are calculated based on the number of grantees that provided each service.

Source: Grantee Survey.

5.3 Funding for Supportive Services

Grantees could spend up to 10 percent of the grant funds on supportive services and could leverage additional funds to cover the costs of these services as well. Limited funding and limited availability of resources meant that programs often placed restrictions on supportive services. One type of restriction on supportive services was limiting when participants could access the services—before, during, or after training. In the grantee survey, about three-quarters of grantees in both programs indicated that they provided access to supportive services after a participant enrolled but prior to the start of training, and about half offered supportive services after participants completed training as well (Appendix Exhibit A-7). In interviews, three grantees said they wished they could offer participants continued support after training completion. One of those grantees remarked that for a participant who has been unemployed, returning to work is a big transition. The grantee noted that “...they still need some of that guidance and supportive services throughout for the next few months...just to adjust to that new employment life.”

Most grantees placed limits on the amount of supportive services participants could receive (Exhibit 5-3). One grantee budgeted \$1,500 per participant for support services overall, and participants decided whether to use those funds on child care, transportation, or other supportive services. Another grantee capped the funding available for particular services across participants, such as transportation and distributed the funds on a first-come-first-served basis.

Exhibit 5-3. Method of placing limits on supportive services

Method	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
There are no spending limits per participant or per service	13	37	2	15
There is an overall limit on funds spent per participant	9	26	7	54
There is a limit on funds spent on any one service for any one participant	5	14	0	0
There is a limit on funds spent on any one service across all participants	2	6	4	31
Other	6	17	0	0

Notes: TechHire N=35 TechHire, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey.

Grantees could leverage other funding sources to increase the amount of funding available for supportive services. According to the grantee survey, about two-thirds of grantees in both programs leveraged funds from other sources to pay for supportive services. As discussed in Chapter 3, one method of leveraging funds for supportive services was co-enrollment of participants in other programs such as WIOA. One grantee co-enrolled participants in the local One-Stop Center, which paid for supportive services if participants reached the maximum allowed amount under the grant. Two grantees co-enrolled participants in their Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) program to provide additional supportive services (see box).

Co-Enrollment to Increase Funding for Supportive Services

The Workplace, a SWFI grantee, co-enrolled participants with the greatest barriers into its HPOG program, which provides training to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals in healthcare fields and is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. This allowed the grantee to provide additional supportive services to participants.

Source: Quarterly Narrative Reports

5.4 Ability of Supportive Services to Meet Participant Needs

The grantee survey asked grantees that provided each supportive service whether the service was more than adequate, adequate, or less than adequate to meet participants' needs. (Exhibit 5-4). In both programs, work-related supplies and expenses, coaching/mentoring, peer support, and financial counseling were considered adequate or more than adequate to meet the need by 80 percent or more of grantees. The services least likely to be considered adequate differed between the two programs. TechHire grantees indicated that child care (62%) and housing (56%) were the two services that were least likely to adequately meet participant needs. The services least likely to be considered adequate by SWFI grantees were medical care (55%) and mental health assistance (50%). All but two SWFI grantees said that child care services were adequate or more than adequate. SWFI grantees were somewhat more likely to report services as inadequate than TechHire grantees.

Exhibit 5-4. Perceived adequacy of supportive services

Supportive service	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Work-related supplies and expenses (uniforms, tools, licensing fees)	22	97	10	83
Coaching and/or mentoring	29	91	13	100
Peer support	27	90	11	100
Financial counseling	21	84	8	83
Transportation	24	80	10	77
Emergency assistance	21	78	7	64
Food assistance (other than SNAP)	20	74	10	77
Medical Care	18	72	6	55
Mental health assistance	18	72	6	50
Legal assistance	14	70	7	64
Child care	18	62	11	92
Housing	14	56	8	62

Note: Counts indicate the grantees that selected either “adequate” or “more than adequate” for a service that they provide. The denominators vary by the number of grantees offering a service.

TechHire N=20-32, SWFI N=11-13.

Source: Grantee Survey, G5.

Grantee and partner interviews provide insight into why supportive services may have been insufficient. Eight grantees and two partners said that the supportive services were insufficient to meet participant needs due to limited availability of services in the local area, such as transportation and housing. One grantee worked directly with participants to secure housing, and also referred them to the public housing department, but said that the wait time to access a Section 8 voucher or get into public housing was so long that the participants could not obtain housing during the course of the training. One SWFI grantee provided parents with \$2,400 to cover the cost of child care while they were in training and lamented that even that amount of funding assistance could not always help parents to cover the ever-rising cost of child care, especially if the participant had more than one child. Two grantees said that there was only so much that supportive services could do to tackle the complex needs of participants. Two grantees mentioned having participants with mental health problems that could not be addressed by the available supportive services. Despite these difficulties, supportive services were viewed as helpful. Eight grantees and four partners said that the supportive services made a difference in helping participants to complete the training programs, and two grantees said that participants were grateful to have received the services.

“I think it helps out tremendously. I remember, I go to a lot of the graduations, and they’ll thank you. You’ll have parents, you’ll have significant others, thank the system for the gas card, the \$50 gas card, because they don’t know how they would find money for that.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

If they had the funding to do so, grantees and partners said they would add (or increase) one or more of the following supports:

- Transportation assistance (five grantees)
- Child care (four grantees)
- Housing (four grantees)
- Stipends for participation (i.e., “Earn and Learn”) (three grantees, one partner)
- Laptops and/or internet service (three grantees)
- Healthcare, including mental healthcare (two grantees)
- Food assistance (two grantees)
- Intensive case management (two grantees)
- Tutoring (two grantees)
- Professional attire (e.g., “Dress for Success”) (one partner)
- Credentialing/testing fees (e.g., registration fee for the A+ test)(one grantee)

While grantee responses did not indicate actual plans to add services, this list provides some indication of what services grantees felt were required for participants to be successful.

“Again, housing and transportation is just one of those things that there’s not enough of. It’s a national issue. It’s not just a [grant] issue, or a [grantee organization] issue. It’s something that is a major issue. And it’s again something, if I can make it broader, that we see across all [grantee locations], that it’s just an ongoing issue and trying your best to manage it.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

5.5 Challenges and Strategies Related to Supportive Services

In interviews, grantees and partners reported several challenges in providing supportive services. Three grantees reported disagreements among program staff about how to allocate supportive services to participants. One grantee said that their leadership told them not to advertise the supportive services they offer and suggested that they push back on some of participants’ requests for assistance out of concern that participants would ask for supportive services that they did not truly need. Another grantee said that they wanted to advertise the availability of funding to help cover participant child care expenses, but their partner (a workforce investment board) was unwilling to do so because the partner could not provide the same support to non-participants in existing training programs. The partner wanted to offer child care assistance only to participants that specifically asked for it.

As noted earlier, transportation repeatedly emerged as a challenge, but grantees devised innovative solutions to help transport participants to and from trainings. Thirty-one TechHire programs and all SWFI programs provided transportation assistance, commonly including gas cards and bus passes (where public transit was available). Other types of transportation assistance included

- Validated parking (one grantee);
- Train passes (one grantee);
- Mobile learning center (one grantee) (see box);
- Help with acquiring a driver’s license (three grantees); and
- A grantee-owned van to transport participants (two grantees).

Providing Transportation Services to Participants in Rural Areas

State Technical College of Missouri built a “mobile learning center” to serve participants in rural areas who struggle to find reliable transportation. “It is a 45-foot trailer that’s pulled by a big old truck and all of our training units are in like big black suitcases on wheels,” said the grantee. “So we can literally teach our classes in a church basement, in a manufacturing plant, we’ve taught a class at Unilever. We can teach at Salvation Army, and we can teach inside the prison walls and we can teach at probation and parole, which we have.”

Source: Grantee interviews

Seven grantees reported that participants’ needs for transportation services extended beyond attending training to obtaining and maintaining employment. In fact, they noted that part of the case management and job search assistance provided involved conversations with participants about where they could find employment that would be accessible with regard to the transportation options available to them. To create avenues to accessible employment options, one grantee said that they intentionally tried to partner with employers that were within the reach of public transportation or with employers who could

provide transportation assistance to employees. They saw this as a way to facilitate job retention by ensuring that participants have a dependable way to get to work.

“I think the secret sauce, as we call it, is really our career mentor work that builds a relationship with [participants] early on. Just from that initial intake or assessment to get to know them but to make sure that we’re not only looking at eligibility but program fit and fit for the career. So that career mentor follows them throughout the entire process of [program] and is working with them on soft skills and working with them on setting their goals and getting them to think forward about how they’re going to complete and go into new employment in this career field.”

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

A common thread in grantee and partner remarks about supporting participants was the value of building personal relationships with them. About half of all grantees adopted some form of case management approach and established staff roles to help participants navigate the process from enrollment through training completion. Seven grantees, rather than having a case manager follow a participant from start to finish, created career counselor positions to work one-on-one with participants to help them identify and build credentials to support a specific career pathway. While personal relationships helped participants overcome barriers to completing training, one grantee cautioned that grantees considering a case management approach should not underestimate how much staff time such an approach takes. To regularly check in with participants takes time, as does the work of following up on participant requests for

supportive services. Sufficient staff resources are needed to provide effective case management and to allow time to build personal relationships.

6. Child Care Provision and Systems Change

The goal of SWFI was to help low-income parents develop their careers by removing barriers to education and training, especially child care and other needs specific to working families. To meet this objective, SWFI grantees combined education and training with supportive services for families. The grant required programs to “simultaneously address both job training needs and child care barriers of low- and middle-skilled parents through individual services (program-level activities) and by developing or improving systems navigation services that will result in sustainable systemic change (system-level activities).”

Key Chapter Findings

- Grantees aimed to use SWFI to help participants in at least three specific ways: to help parents plan for all their child care needs while engaged in training and employment; to navigate locally available subsidies for child care; and to provide direct funding to cover the “gaps” in subsidized funding.
- In general, grantees considered SWFI grant money as the funding source “of last resort” to use only when needed to fill gaps in existing child care service provision.
- Grantees reported success working with child care providers to accommodate some of the child care needs of parent participants. This included creating partnerships between training programs and child care providers to integrate training and care into a “one-stop” program, designating a child care navigator with duties to help parents find child care, helping child care providers meet licensing requirements, and streamlining payment systems.
- Grantees did not report much success working with the workforce development system and employers to accommodate the child care needs of participants.

In this chapter, we discuss how grantees met the child care needs of SWFI participants and how grantees worked with child care and workforce systems to better support working parents. At the program-level, grantees scheduled and delivered trainings in a flexible manner to meet the needs of working parents, by conducting trainings online or planning trainings during hours when child care was available. Grantees also provided access to child care for trainings and job searches. Helping parents navigate complex subsidized child care systems was another program-level activity. To support program-level activities, grantees engaged in compiling information to navigate subsidized child care systems, advocated for parents with the workforce system and with employers, worked with the workforce and child care systems to adjust services so they met the needs of low-income parents, and streamlined service delivery.

6.1 Aim of SWFI Program-Level Activities

Grantees explained that they sought SWFI grants to help parents train for, seek, and maintain employment by assisting with child care and other services for working families. A major barrier preventing low- and middle-skilled parents from furthering their career and finding work is the high cost of child care; 11 of 13 SWFI grantees cited “challenges affording child care” as an impetus for seeking the SWFI grant (Exhibit 6-1). During in-depth interviews, grantees told us that they aimed to use SWFI to help participants in at least three specific ways: to help parents plan for all their child care needs while engaged in training and employment; to navigate locally available subsidies for child care; and to provide direct funding to cover the “gaps” in subsidized funding. In the sections below, we discuss these three aims as described by grantees in in-depth interviews. We triangulate these qualitative findings with quantitative findings from the survey.

Exhibit 6-1. Barriers addressed by SWFI grant

Barrier	Number	Percent
Challenges affording child care	11	85
Mismatch of schedule of education and training and affordable child care options	11	85
Lack of information about child care options and/or help finding care	10	77
Challenges with location or transportation	10	77
Challenges with the supply of care that meets participants' specific needs	10	77
Lack of child care slots	9	69
Mismatch of schedule of employment and available child care options	8	62

Note: N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, G6.

Help Parents Plan Child Care for All Exigencies. In the in-depth interviews, all grantees described problem-solving about child care with parents engaged in workforce service usage. Parents needed to think about multiple child care options, especially those parents who relied on informal caregivers for their children. One grantee described the impetus for applying for the SWFI grant as having come from observing informal child care arrangements falling through for parents during training. This grantee said that they now can help parents explicitly design “Plan B” and “Plan C” child care arrangements. Additionally, the grantee encouraged parents to think about arrangements for when they are studying or when their child is ill.

Navigating Complex Child Care Systems on Behalf of Parents. Ten of the thirteen SWFI grantees regarded a “lack of information about child care options” as an important problem to address with the SWFI grant. Grantees aimed to use the grant to assist participants with navigating the child care system. Before SWFI, parents involved in training had to search for, and learn about, available options in their communities by themselves. One grantee explained that their participants kept getting “lost” in the child care system because they would send them “out on their own” to investigate options. This grantee used SWFI to create a dedicated “concierge” to guide participants through the process.

Use Funding to Cover Existing “Gaps” in Child Care Coverage. A gap identified by grantees during the in-depth interviews was the lack of child care subsidies to cover time spent by parents in training. Under SWFI, grantees were able to use the grant to pay for child care while low-income parents undertook training. Some existing subsidies for low-income workers can only be used to facilitate parental employment, not training. One grantee said that they applied for a SWFI grant after they observed that low-skilled clients of their organization were turning away training opportunities due to a lack of affordable child care.

In other communities served by SWFI grantees, program administrators noticed that existing child care systems had long waitlists for subsidized child care. Nine of the thirteen grantees said that a shortage of slots for affordable child care was a barrier. Other subsidized child care programs required that parents be already in a training or a job, leaving the parent without care for the beginning of their training or employment, increasing the potential for failure. An option was to use SWFI funds to pay for child care until the parent qualified for the other available subsidies.

6.2 Other Barriers to Child Care for SWFI Participants

As discussed in the previous section, three barriers—the cost of child care, the complexity of subsidized child care systems, and the lack of availability of subsidized child care—were those that grantees described in in-depth interviews as most in need of remediation with the SWFI grant. However, on the survey, grantees identified other barriers encountered by low-income, low- and middle-skilled parents seeking child care for training and employment. Below we discuss three commonly cited program-level barriers to child care.

Eleven of the thirteen SWFI grantees noted that available child care options for low-income parents were mismatched to the schedule and demands of education and training programs (Exhibit 6-1). For example, some training programs have clinical rotations in the evenings, when subsidized child care is less likely to be available, and when the usual cost of child care increases. Eleven of the thirteen programs indicated that trainings are scheduled at times that require off-hours child care. Another problem for participants was the need for child care to meet with their career counselor. Some participants needed child care for short-term trainings, whereas child care providers expected at least a 1-year commitment. Grantees also found that parents who needed 1 or 2 hours of child care before school started (or after it ended) were asked to pay for a one-half day of child care. At one program, staff had such difficulty finding child care that accommodated the parent's externship schedule, that a dedicated counselor solved the problem by collecting the participant's child from the school bus everyday while the participant completed her externship.

Ten grantees reported that challenges with transportation or the location of child care were barriers. Parents experienced increased transportation expenses when they had to drop their kids at care, drive to work/training, drive back to the child care center, and then drive home. Three of thirteen programs indicated child care centers tended to be located at a distance from training and employment. Grantees sometimes offered gas cards to participants with increased travel costs. One grantee offered SWFI funds to parent participants in the form of either \$900 in child care payments or \$900 in gas cards to pay for transportation to and from daycare and training/employment. Parents generally chose the gas cards.

In addition, some participants had specific child care needs that were difficult to address. Ten grantees said that “challenges with the supply of care that meets participants’ specific needs” were barriers. Specifically, grantees described children with special needs or children under the age of 2 years as difficult to place in affordable child care.

6.3 Child Care Services Provided to Participants

SWFI grantees utilized a variety of sources to connect participants with affordable and appropriate child care (Exhibit 6-2). Survey responses indicated that about three-quarters of grantees provided participants with referrals to existing child care services in their communities. In general, grantees considered SWFI grant money as the funding source “of last resort” to use only when needed to fill gaps in existing child care service provision. Nine of the thirteen grantees reported they use “direct vouchers or subsidies” to pay for care, and five programs provided free or low-cost child care directly.

Exhibit 6-2. Source leveraged to support child care

Funding leveraged	Number	Percent
Existing child care services in the community	10	77
Direct vouchers or subsidies	9	69
Assistance accessing vouchers or subsidies for child care	8	62
Direct provision of free or low-cost child care	5	38

Note: N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, G7.

It was necessary for SWFI grantees to patch together child care services for children’s specific developmental needs and for different phases of parental career development. Subsidized child care resources available in grantees’ communities had eligibility requirements or waiting periods that meant that no one child care resource in the community could serve all participants’ needs, or even one participant’s needs at all times. As mentioned above, many locally available programs would not pay for child care during participants’ training, although they would pay for child care during parental employment. Some child care providers did not accommodate children with special needs, or who were younger than 2 years. Subsidized child care programs inevitably had a waitlist and/or a waiting period, meaning that parents who needed child care immediately for training or employment had to make other affordable child care arrangements until they could utilize community programs.

“Now we have this dedicated person. We can say, ‘Okay—go to [name]—she’s the one that’s going to tell you about your options.’ It makes it easier for them. Instead of going off into the abyss...they have someone that’s...walking them through the process.”

—SWFI Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

Depending on the difficulties involved in successfully cobbling together community funding to accommodate all participants eligible for SWFI, grantees implemented several strategies to help participants access vouchers or subsidies for care and/or find appropriate child care (Exhibit 6-3). One strategy engaged in by 8 of the 13 grantees (62%) involved researching affordable and locally available child care options and compiling a list for staff to use with parent participants. Another strategy described by grantees was designating an employee as the child care specialist who would work with parents to develop child care plan(s) for their unique circumstances. Nine grantees (69%) described

designating an employee as a child care navigator to provide referrals to child care services. For example, one grantee designated a “child care concierge” to help participants through the process of obtaining affordable child care. This grantee explained to the interviewer that they had previously “left [participants] to their own devices” to search for child care, and they found that participants with children frequently were not successful with training and employment.

Exhibit 6-3. Grantee activities to accommodate participants' child care needs

Child care-facilitating activities	Number	Percent
Provide funding to cover gaps when participants do not qualify for other programs	11	85
Provide funds to cover gaps created by need for nonstandard care	11	85
Use a child care navigator for referrals	9	69
Map child care service available	8	62
Educate participants on how to evaluate child care quality	8	62
Develop materials for parents	6	46
Co-locate child care with training	4	31

Note: N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, K1.

Assistance Accessing Vouchers or Subsidies for Child Care. To help parent participants access funds to pay for child care for career-related activities through SWFI, grantees either designated a single employee as a child care navigator, such as the “conciierge” discussed previously (9 grantees), provided child care-system navigation as part of a package of services provided during an appointment with a career counselor, or relied on a partner to aid participants in accessing funding. The sources of child care funding accessed by SWFI grantees depended upon the resources for subsidized child care available in the local community. Frequently grantees made heavy use of programs to pay for child care run by states’ departments of human services using Federal block grants under TANF or Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). For example, a Chicago-based grantee helped SWFI parents make applications to the Illinois Action for Children program, a statewide resource sponsored by the Illinois Department of Human Services. In California, grantees assisted participants in accessing payment for child care through CalWORKS funding. In Tennessee, the grantee was able to access TANF to pay for child care for most of the 5-year SWFI grant period, until the state’s TANF program stopped offering child care subsidies. SWFI staff frequently assisted participants with completing and filing applications for TANF- or CCDBG-funded child care subsidies.

One problem confronted by SWFI grantees was that requirements child care facilities need to meet to utilize specific sources of funding were sometimes extensive and expensive. Extensive requirements meant that many local child care providers were unlicensed or otherwise, did not meet the requirements of the state’s subsidy programs. Grantees dealt with this problem in multiple ways, including working with providers to obtain licensure and petitioning the city to lower licensure requirements so more child care providers could afford to meet them. However, depending on the local licensure requirements, the level of funding dedicated to child care subsidies, and the eligibility requirements to utilize the subsidies, SWFI grantees sometimes advised participants to evaluate unlicensed providers. The process of helping participants vet unlicensed providers is discussed in the next section. How grantees negotiated with child care providers and local government to increase participants’ access to federally funded child care is discussed in Section “6.5.

Referrals to Existing Child Care Services in the Community. In addition to requiring help to obtain subsidized child care, participants sometimes needed assistance finding affordable child care providers. As discussed in Section 6.1, participants frequently were unaware of the child care options available to them until the SWFI programs began actively assisting participants with their child care needs. Eight SWFI grantees indicated that they invested effort into researching available

child care options and compiled referral lists that would meet participants' needs. The solution to a participants child care needs could vary depending on factors including the following:

- Funding source available to the participant (SWFI, TANF, CCDBG, private),
- Hours of operation for facilities in the local area,
- Distance of facilities from participant's home and training/employment,
- Child/ren's characteristics (age, special needs, number of children), and
- Availability of social support (family caregivers).

SWFI grantees found that with these, and other, factors in play, child care needed to be tailored to each participant and his or her child. SWFI grantees also made referrals to HeadStart programs when they were appropriate to the age and development of the child, conveniently located, and covered the hours needed by the parent.

“And it’s been really excellent to have the DOL funding to contract directly with child care providers in the case that subsidies are not readily available...”

—SWFI Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

- **Direct Vouchers or Subsidies.** When participants' child care needs could not be satisfied by another existing program, due to long wait lists, lack of eligibility of child or parent, lack of after-hours care, etc., 11 grantees used SWFI funds to pay for participants' child care. For some participants, SWFI funds were the first funds accessed. For example, parents who did not qualify for TANF sometimes received SWFI funds to subsidize child care. In other circumstances, grantees used SWFI funds to pick up child care costs once the participant had “maxed out” other resources or the child had “aged-out.” Some participants received SWFI funds to pay for child care for the early period of their training program or employment while their application to the state for subsidized child care was being processed.
- **Direct Provision of Free or Low-Cost Child Care.** Five grantees indicated they provide free or low-cost child care directly to participants. One strategy, reported by four grantees, was to co-locate child care with training. For example, at one program, numerous participants underwent training to become CNAs. The grantee holds CNA training on site and brings child care on site. Child care workers pull parents out of class to change diapers or take their child to the washroom. This grantee also described providing free child care during job fairs. One grantee described another strategy for accommodating children when participants met with their career counselors. At this site, the grantee designated an area for children with toys. Parents meet with staff at a location where they can view this area to keep an eye on their children.
- **Home-Based Providers and Family Caregivers.** In-depth interviews with grantees revealed that for some participants, child care provided by family caregivers and home-based providers are viable options. Some participants began grantees' programs with child care provided by a family member. Nonetheless, grantees sometimes offered these participants other affordable child care options to “lift that responsibility off a family member or a friend while they're in the program.” At least one subsidized child care program available locally to

a grantee's participants provided compensation to relatives of the participant to pay for child care. In contrast, SWFI funds could not be used for child care provided by relatives.

Before implementing SWFI, grantees witnessed participants' informal child care arrangements falling through during training, sometimes with the result that the participant left the training program. Therefore, grantees worked with participants, especially those who relied on family members or friends for child care, to develop alternate child care plans.

To the extent practical, grantees included home-based child care providers in their directories. However, one grantee reported that parents were sometimes hesitant to leave their children with home-based providers, because they associated them with molestation scandals.

As a result of misinformation and lack of information, grantees believed it was important to educate participants not only about available subsidized child care options but also on how to assess the quality of care. Eight grantees indicated providing education about child care was an important component of the SWFI program. One grantee explained that "the reality" was that parents might need to use unlicensed child care providers²⁷ once they were no longer participating in SWFI. This grantee described providing participants with "an education" in how to differentiate between good and risky child care providers. The grantee accompanied participants to child care facilities before they began their training and taught them what questions to ask, what to look for, and what documentation providers should have. This grantee also provided parents with a "health and safety checklist" to evaluate child care providers on their own. Six grantees reported that they developed such materials to aid participants with accessing safe, affordable child care.

6.4 System-Level Advocacy and Awareness Raising

The survey asked grantees about their efforts to conduct system-level advocacy and raise awareness of child care needs (Exhibit 6-4). Four grantees reported that they developed a working group or steering committee to address affordable child care issues at the systems-level. One grantee reported that bringing together the county child care and workforce systems led to greater access to subsidies for their participants. Another grantee expected that sending SWFI child care navigators to workforce board meetings would result in more referrals from the workforce to SWFI. Instead, navigators' participation resulted in greater awareness among the board members of the difficulties facing participants in poverty. Now the grantee and the workforce board are looking to partner with an organization that can help remove poverty. However, even when grantees did not develop a working group or steering committee de novo, all grantees reported engaging in similar activities, including continued participation in existing groups or committees to integrate their local workforce systems with the child care systems.

Grantees agreed that the workforce system needs to understand the needs of low-income, low- and middle-skilled parents, especially those of single parents. Grantees felt that their participants were a source of potential untapped by the workforce. For example, one grantee explained that they have been attending meetings to educate the workforce development community and training partners about "what it takes to secure subsidized child care and why it is so important to pay attention to this population of parents who are great candidates for their programs but have additional needs."

²⁷ Note that this grantee provides services in a state where unlicensed child care is legal; unlicensed child care is not legal in all states.

Exhibit 6-4. Grantee system-level advocacy and awareness-raising activities

Activity	Number	Percent
Providing training to program staff on systems issues	8	62
Develop working group or steering committee	4	31
Provide consultation to employers about child care needs of low- and middle-skilled workers	3	23

Note: N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, K1.

Grantees also felt that employers needed to address child care problems to aid employee retention. Three grantees indicated they had provided consultations about child care needs to employers. However, grantees found different levels of success with asking employers to accommodate parents' needs. One grantee said they try to raise awareness about the barriers faced by families struggling with poverty and obtained from one employer a promise to give the program a year to help participants overcome barriers to employment. Efforts with employers did not always succeed, however. Another grantee said that their "goal of having child care [providers] and employers understand each other more and work closer together" failed. Grantees sometimes worked at the level of the individual participant to advocate for him or her with an employer or training provider. For example, one grantee said that they have participants at a work site that transfers employees to second shifts after completing on-the-job training. Single moms at this work site needed to find affordable after-hours care for an indefinite period—a near impossibility. At the time of the grantee's interview, this problem had not been resolved, but the grantee had discussed possibilities with the employer.

"It's creating an open-minded employer. That way they know the struggles our local populations are facing—those at or below the poverty level. To lift them [they need to] give them the opportunity."

—SWFI Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

6.5 Child Care Systems Change

Grantees reported success working with child care providers to accommodate some of the child care needs of parent participants. As discussed above, SWFI grantees created partnerships between training programs and child care providers to integrate training and care into a "one-stop" program. Also, as mentioned above, nine SWFI grantees designated a child care navigator with duties to help parents find child care, but also to work with the child care system to bring about changes benefiting parents. For example, one such navigator regularly attended child care provider meetings where she updated the grantee's information about providers, but emphasized to providers that the grantee would ensure that the provider receives payment for services. This navigator negotiates rates with providers and "customizes the child care availability based on the participants." For example, she has been able to convince providers to adjust their hours of service to accommodate participants' training and employment. Another grantee explained that their affordable child care providers expected a 1-year commitment from parents, which did not match the training needs of parent participants. Over time, the grantee cultivated a trusting relationship with the provider and reassured them that the grantee would have future referrals to fill any slot that might become open at the end of a training.

Grantees worked with child care providers to help them meet licensing requirements when licensure was necessary to receive the subsidized child care funding available to participants. One grantee helped child care providers with minor violations bring their services up to code. Another grantee helped home-based providers obtain state licensure. One outstanding example of collaboration is a grantee who petitioned the city to lower the requirement for liability insurance from \$1 million to \$500,000, closer to the state requirement of \$300,000, encouraging more child care providers to meet the requirements for accepting subsidized child care payments. Lowering the required dollar amount of liability insurance resulted in more child care providers in the city meeting licensure requirements and, consequently, for receiving subsidized payments. Subsequently, low-income parents in the city had more choices of where to place their children.

Integrating Training and Child Care

City of Long Beach instituted a “single-payer” child care system in which their organization pays child care providers serving participants’ children directly, rather than with a reimbursement to the parent or a voucher. This increased providers’ willingness to serve children with child care subsidies. Rather than waiting months for payment, they receive payment for each child every two weeks under the “single-payer” program.

Source: Grantee interviews

6.6 Service Delivery Streamlining

As in the case described in the box above of the “single-payer” child care system, grantees sought to make the affordable child care system easier to access and use for providers and parents alike. This sometimes involved advocating for changes at the state level to workforce and child care systems. For example, one grantee worked with the state workforce system to include a question on the workforce services application about whether the applicant needed child care. If the applicant indicated a need for child care, the workforce website links them to the state child care subsidy program. Another grantee streamlined the application process among all divisions of its sprawling organization so that participants only need to fill out an application once and then it may be routed to the appropriate partner or service provider.

6.7 Program Sustainability

At the end of the 4-year grant period, programs will no longer receive SWFI funds. However, grantees believe that SWFI has filled an urgent need of parent participants, and they want to continue to provide at least some of the same services at the end of the grant period. Altogether, nine grantees described plans to sustain services after SWFI. At least four of the grantees planned to reallocate existing program funds (WIOA, formula funding, etc.) to cover child care expenses and related services (navigation, referrals, etc.). Three grantees explained that they will apply for more funding to sustain SWFI services. One grantee explained that they will no longer be able to pay for child care directly after the grant expires. However, they will continue to provide child care navigation, a “hugely” important service. Lastly, one grantee described how their organization petitioned the state governor to include child care expenses into the state’s existing plan to provide low-income people with free community college or applied college, an addition that the grantee said would make the state’s free college program “truly free.”

6.8 SWFI Program Success

In general, SWFI grantees felt they were successful in meeting the goals of the grant (Exhibit 6-5). Not surprisingly, all grantees were able to leverage funds to pay for child care services, since the SWFI grant provided funds to do so. The overwhelming majority of grantees thought that their efforts had increased training and child care access for participants. About three-quarters of grantees felt they had successfully coordinated child care, training, and workforce development services on behalf of participants. The extent to which grantees thought they had improved the collaboration of these systems varied, with less than half believing they were “somewhat successful,” and slightly more than half believing they were “very successful” or “successful.” Most grantees thought that their efforts had improved the quality of the care available.

Exhibit 6-5. Grantee perceptions of the success of SWFI activities

Activity	Number	Percent successful or very successful
Leveraging funds to pay for child care services	13	100
Increasing access to training and child care for low-income and working parents	12	92
Coordinating with existing child care referral and education services	10	77
Improving coordination between workforce development services and child care service providers	9	75
Improving collaboration among training providers, employers, and child care service providers	7	58
Preventing families with child care from losing care	4	44
Increasing the quality of child care	6	44
Streamlining referrals through data systems	4	36

Note: N=6 to 13.

Source: Grantee Survey, K2.

6.9 Discussion and Implications

It is important to note that every SWFI grantee operated their program within a very specific socio-ecological niche comprised of the following components, among others:

- Sources for subsidies (SWFI, TANF, CCDBG, other public sources, private);
- Child care facility standards and licensure requirements;
- Level of awareness about subsidized child care in community (advertising, lack of “red-tape”);
- Geography (location of trainings, employment, child care, local traffic considerations);
- Hours of facilities operation, hours of trainings/employment;
- Child/ren’s characteristics (age, special needs, number of children); and
- Availability of informal child care (family support).

States have wide latitude to utilize TANF and CCDBG grants as they wish. For example, with regards to TANF, states may specify their own child care eligibility requirements; their own child care licensure requirements; and, in fact, they may earmark greater or lesser (or no) portion of TANF monies for child care. This results in vast differences across states in the wait times for subsidized care, the characteristics (and proportion) of families that qualify, and the density of child care providers that may receive subsidies in comparison to those that do not meet the requirements specified by the state. As we learned from grantees, the extent to which they utilized these grants to help families as they develop their career varied extensively. In some regions (California, for example), TANF-funded child care is relatively easy to access—to the extent that participants entered the grantee’s program with subsidized child care in place. In contrast, in other states (Mississippi, for example), grantees considered federally subsidized child care a source of last resort due to funding limits and bureaucratic difficulties accessing it. In states where parents qualify relatively easily and funding is generous, but requirements for accepting children with subsidized child care are higher than the local (city, county) requirements, few facilities may accommodate children with subsidies effectively making it hard for parents to access child care. Further, these socio-ecological niches are not stable: funding, eligibility, licensing requirements, etc. change over time. For example, the grantee in Tennessee will need to find other sources of funding for child care as TANF will no longer provide subsidies in the future and SWFI has ended.

The types of trainings sought by SWFI participants can further complicate the task of obtaining affordable child care. Depending on the nature of the industry (medicine, advanced manufacturing, etc.) child care facilities may be located close by or at a distance from trainings and employment due to zoning, property costs, etc. Likewise, child care hours may overlap well with employment for parents whose training and employment is in an office environment, but it may not overlap at all for parents on second shifts at manufacturing plants.

It is difficult to generalize “best practices” across programs. Every grantee operated in a specific environment where child care funding, types of employment/training, geography, traffic, ease of access to subsidized child care, etc. varied greatly. However, there were several practices that grantees used that they believed were effective. Based on these findings, other programs may wish to do the following:

- **Use child care systems navigation to assist parent participants in identifying appropriate child care and accessing subsidies.** Grantees sometimes embedded a specific “navigator” in their organization, but other possibilities were to spread “navigation” duties across career counselors or to refer parent participants to a partner that provided navigation. The most effective way for a given grantee to accomplish navigation depended on a number of variables, including (1) the availability of other child care navigation resources in the community; (2) the extent to which participants qualify for subsidized programs (that is, how frequently do participants fall in the “gaps” necessitating additional effort to locate resources?); and (3) the ease with which participants may identify or access care on their own due to advertising, eligibility requirements, and bureaucracy.
- **Make the process of locating appropriate, affordable child care family centered.** There are no one-size-fits-all subsidies or providers for participants and their families. Child and family characteristics, location of the home, and the availability of informal child care with family caregivers are all important when searching for appropriate, affordable child care.

- **Grantees reported success working with child care providers to alter their services to accommodate participants' needs. However, grantees experienced less success convincing workforce systems to alter their services. Grantees experienced little success persuading employers to accommodate participants' child care needs.** Grantees worked with child care providers to help them clear code violations and increase liability coverage so that they could receive child care subsidies for minding participants' children. They were also able to streamline child care payment and application processes. One area of success working with the workforce system was in co-locating training and child care. However, it is not clear if these arrangements will persist without SWFI funding. In some cases, grantees were able to advocate on behalf of individual participants with employers. However, systemic change to how employers accommodate low-income (and especially, single) parents is still elusive.

7. Job Development, Placement, and Retention

Grantees offered assistance to help participants find and retain employment such as job search assistance, job placement assistance, and job coaching/counseling. Some grantees took the lead in providing job services whereas others relied on their partners to take on this task. In addition to helping participants find jobs, some grantees continued to work with participants after they had been placed to help participants stay employed, and in some cases, work toward wage increases or promotions at their current job or by transitioning to a new job. In this chapter, we review the approaches to job placement among grantees, job placement services provided, employers' perceptions of program completers, and challenges and strategies related to job placement.

Key Chapter Findings

- Grantees offered a variety of job development and placement services, though most did not require participants to engage in these services.
- Employers expressed positive views of program completers' technical skills and motivation, though soft skills were lacking according to some employers.
- Although employers interviewed spoke positively of program graduates, few were willing to make commitments about hiring or interviewing.
- Grantees encountered several challenges placing participants into jobs, including a lack of soft skills, personal circumstances such as lack of transportation, lack of engagement with job placement services, and employers' reluctance to hire. Grantees also faced challenges following up with participants.

7.1 Job Development, Placement, and Retention Services

Grantees provided a variety of job development and placement services (Exhibit 7-1). According to the grantee survey, the following services were near universally provided by TechHire grantees: job search assistance (97%), identifying job openings (97%), meeting with employers to identify job openings for graduates (97%), soft skills/workplace readiness instruction (94%), career counseling (94%), and operating or referring participants to job fairs (86%). Fewer grantees (53%) developed hiring agreements with employers. The majority of SWFI grantees similarly provided most of the services.

Exhibit 7-1. Job development and placement services provided to participants

Service offered	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Job search assistance (e.g., resume building, interview preparation)	35	97	12	92
Identify job openings/provide job listings	35	97	12	92
Meet with employers to identify job openings for graduates	35	97	10	77
Soft skills/workplace readiness instruction	34	94	12	92
Career counseling	34	94	12	92
Operate or refer participants to job fairs	31	86	12	92
Develop hiring agreements with employers	19	53	5	38

Notes: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey.

In interviews with grantees, five grantees said that they provided mandatory job development services. One grantee said that all participants took a 5-week course which addressed interviewing techniques, resumes, cover letters, soft skills, and barriers; in another, the job placement team makes presentations on job development periodically during the training itself, in the classroom. When grantees did not provide mandatory job development services, resume building was participants’ most popular job development activity, according to eight grantees. These grantees believed that resumes were most important to participants because they created the first impression with employers and many participants did not have resumes or had not updated resumes in years. One grantee brought in professional resume consultants who walked participants through the process of creating expert resumes. One grantee opened their workshops on job searches and resume building to completers as well as current participants; another program emphasized to participants that their career department was always open for them, even after graduation.

“And then, of course, there’s people have relationships with their career coaches and their business relations people. And so we don’t really limit it to 2 years. It could be 3 years ago my job coach, [name], placed me in this job and now I just suddenly am unemployed. I’m like, ‘Hey, [name], remember me? I’m unemployed. Can you hook me up?’ And we hook our students up like that all the time.”

—Grantee on the relationship between career coaches and participants

Source: Grantee interviews

Grantees used a variety of methods to connect participants to employers. Employers were involved in internships, resume building, job fairs, mock interviews, job shadowing, workplace tours, and soft skills training. One grantee created “reverse job fairs,” where employers visit participant tables, something employers appreciated as it reduced their time commitment. Another grantee created employer-student mixers, where employers provided information on industries and participants circulated their resumes. Another strategy was using a recruitment specialist for engaging businesses, which was discussed by two grantees in interviews. These recruitment specialists talked to employers in the target industries about hiring as well as providing work-based learning and incumbent worker training. All grantees reported employer involvement in job development, as well, which included

soft skills training, interviewing workshops, job shadowing, and workplace tours.

Grantees provided career counseling either directly or indirectly through a partner such as a training provider or workforce investment system organization. The active job coaching support that grantees offered was typically provided by a career coach/counselor/employment specialist, who would be assigned to the participant usually soon after enrollment. This career coach would then perform assessments on the participants' job skills and career interests, and make recommendations about what types of job placement services the participant would benefit from. Grantees varied in terms of when employment specialists were introduced to participants. One grantee introduced participants to their employment specialist when they received their acceptance email. The grantee believed that this helped with retention and participant followup.

"I think they've done a fine job on trying to teach them work ethic, which is something that's very hard to teach. But again, I think it goes back to holding them accountable, so if you're late for the program, it shouldn't be any different than when you're late for a job. There are repercussions when you're tardy or you don't come in. And I think they've done a fine job of trying to teach them that work ethic, which I think a lot of youths don't have."

— Employer on the success of soft skills training

Source: Partner interviews

Grantees provided soft skills training in both one-on-one and workshop formats. Soft skills training included topics such as work expectations, time management skills, and communication skills. One grantee used an assessment to score participants' soft skills at entry, to guide further training. Another grantee said that the training provider incorporated soft skills training into technical training, with lessons on collaboration and teamwork built into classes.

7.1.1 Job Retention

"So we're not just providing training, but we're a nuts-and-bolts organization. We're going to see them through, and even after because of the retention piece. We're going to connect with you a career culture or retention specialist to make sure that you stay on that job, or if there's an advancement opportunity."

—Grantee on the benefit of retention and advancement services

Source: Grantee interviews

In addition to helping participants find jobs, some grantees continued to work with participants after they were placed. These retention and advancement services were designed to help participants stay employed, and in some cases, work toward wage increases or promotions at their current job or by transitioning to a new job. Grantees provided these services directly or through partners. In the grantee survey, all TechHire grantees said that they used emails to stay in touch with participants and the majority used telephone calls (97%, 34 grantees); in-person meetings (91%, 30 grantees); telephone calls or meetings with employers (82%, 27 grantees); and social media (71%, 22 grantees) (Exhibit 7-2). Fewer grantees used retention incentives such as gift cards (40%, 12 grantees). SWFI grantees were less likely to use social media and more likely to use retention

incentives as methods for participant followup than TechHire grantees.

Exhibit 7-2. Methods used to follow up with participants after job placement

Method	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees	Number of grantees	Percent of grantees
Emails to participant	35	100	12	100
Telephone calls to participant	34	97	12	100
In-person meetings with participant	30	91	10	83
Telephone calls or meetings with employer	27	82	8	67
Social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn)	22	71	5	42
Retention incentives or gift cards	12	40	8	67

Notes: TechHire N=30-35, SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Survey.

Among grantees that provided retention and advancement services, most provided the services for a relatively short time after program completion, according to the grantee survey (Exhibit 7-3). Less than half of TechHire grantees provided in-person meetings with participants (32%), telephone calls to participants (44%), and emails to participants (44%) for 90 days or longer after placement. Half of grantees provided social media followup for 90 days or longer. Retention incentives and gift cards were used to keep in touch over a longer time period by more grantees. Seventy percent of grantees used retention incentives to keep in touch 90 days or more after job placement. In general, a higher percentage of SWFI grantees reported longer followup in all methods except social media.

Exhibit 7-3. Length of time followup with participants after job placement

Follow up	Percent of TechHire grantees			Percent of SWFI grantees		
	30 days	60 days	90 days or longer	30 days	60 days	90 days or longer
Emails to participant	33	22	44	33	17	50
Telephone calls to participant	37	19	44	33	17	50
In-person meetings with participant	40	28	32	30	10	60
Telephone calls or meetings with employer	43	22	35	13	25	63
Social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn)	28	22	50	40	20	40
Retention incentives or gift cards	10	20	70	13	13	75

Notes: TechHire N=10-27, SWFI N=5-12.

Source: Grantee Survey.

The grantee and partner interviews provided further insight into how grantees followed up with program completers. Followup could involve communication with either the participant or the employer. One grantee mentioned that they communicated with participants' employers to avert layoffs and work through issues and facilitate discussions with employers around wage increases and promotions for participants. One partner said that they provided post-employment coaching and retention services on topics such as talking to a supervisor, adjusting to a new baby in the house, managing a tax return, garnishments, paying health bills, court actions, and mediation help. They also engaged employers in troubleshooting challenges and helping participants identify and pursue career advancement. Followup could also involve working with participants to identify

supportive service needs. One grantee worked with participants who received TANF to retain their TANF child care benefits or link them to other services for access to child care.

7.2 Employers' Satisfaction with Program Completers

As the goal of the grant was to place program completers into jobs, employers' perceptions of program completers demands scrutiny. In the partner survey, employers rated program completers as average or above average compared to other applicants for the same positions on several dimensions (Exhibit 7-4). Two-thirds (64%) of employer partners of TechHire grantees said that completers were better than average in terms of having a positive attitude. Half or more said that participants were better than average in their desire to work hard (56%), English language proficiency (54%), and job performance (50%). However, fewer employers indicated that program completers had better than average skills related to the job (37%), reading, writing, verbal or mathematical skills (34%), and soft or interpersonal skills (33%). Overall, employer partners of SWFI grantees rated the skills and attributes of program completers lower than did TechHire grantees employer partners.

Exhibit 7-4. Employers' rating of referred participants compared to other applicants for the same positions						
Participant rating by employer	Percent of TechHire grantees			Percent of SWFI grantees		
	Better than average	About average	Worse than average	Better than average	About average	Worse than average
Their having a positive attitude	64	30	6	36	55	9
Their desire to work hard	56	38	6	32	50	18
Their English language proficiency	54	43	3	36	50	14
Their job performance	50	42	8	23	55	23
Their dependability/being on time on the job	45	48	6	27	50	23
Their likelihood of advancing to higher level positions	42	50	8	23	55	23
Their skills directly related to the job	37	54	9	18	50	32
Their reading, writing, verbal, or mathematical skills	34	55	11	23	63	14
Their soft/interpersonal skills	33	59	8	18	68	14

Notes: TechHire N=64, SWFI N=22 SWFI.

Source: Partner Survey.

Data from interviews with employers provides further information about employers' perception of program completers. Four employers said that program completers had more motivation than other applicants because they took the initiative to seek out and complete the program, which was difficult given their backgrounds. One employer indicated that they would not have considered applications from low-income backgrounds if not for the program.

In interviews, all 11 employers interviewed provided positive feedback about program completers' occupational skills. Two employers said that program completers' skills were greater than those of other applicants for the positions, and five employers said that the skills were equivalent. Two employers said that given two candidates with the same background, they would rather hire a program completer because they know that the program completer will have the needed skills.

Employers' opinions on credentialing were more mixed. Three employers and five other partners who were involved in job placement said that having certifications in hand or having the ability to pass the exams was a benefit of hiring program graduates. On the other hand, one employer and six grantees said that experience was ultimately more important than certifications in the IT industry; lack of experience could sometimes go against program completers who were newer to IT.

Employers' opinions on the soft skills of program completers were also mixed. Four employers said that program completers' lacked soft skills. Three grantees attributed the lack of soft skills to a failure to impart the skills on the part of the program, whereas one employer indicated that it was not due to the program but rather the backgrounds of the participants. One employer, however, indicated that soft skills of the program completers were better than those of other candidates. Two grantees said that the program completers have better soft skills than other candidates because of the program.

"[A]bout 96 to 98 percent of our employers are highly satisfied with a graduate once they've employed them. And that's 6 months after hire."

—Grantee on the results of a survey of employers

Source: Grantee interviews

Employer Satisfaction with Program Completers

The following are quotes from employers on the benefits of hiring program completers:

- "[I]f you were to take a TechHire graduate next to somebody who, I don't know, got a 4-year degree from [4-year college] in computer science, I would take that TechHire graduate. I just think the hands-on piece of it, the certification piece of it, the job training piece of it, all of that is...—it's a great training program that provides people an opportunity to get the skills they need to be productive members of the team."
- "[W]e found when the candidates come out of the program and we bring them on as new hires, they save us at least 3 months of training, minimum. And after they come out of the program, they're ready to work."
- "We do like having the program graduates because they have that certification already done, potentially, and that helps us as far as hiring knowledgeable team members. And having that certification kind of opens up different kind of roles for them in the pharmacy—more responsibility but, obviously, it brings on more money, and it can increase their rate which kind of works out for them, too."
- "We get some great employees through [the grantee] that stay longer term. They tend to be a lot happier with their careers. And [the grantee] does a really good job of setting them up for success to be out here in the marketplace and be marketable for the different companies in this area."

Source: Partner interviews

7.3 Challenges and Strategies Related to Job Placement

Despite the positive perceptions of program completers on the part of employers, there were several challenges to job placement.

- **Participants' Lack of Soft Skills.** In interviews, 10 grantees identified a lack of soft skills as the most common reason that program completers did not get hired. In addition, four grantees said that participants were reluctant to take the soft skills training offered. As one grantee said: "The soft skills has been a harder sell. We believe that that's because when you say that you're offering soft skills training or employability training, people tend to think that they don't need that. That's for other people. It's a little bit harder of a sell." Furthermore, the need for soft skills training was not apparent for all grantees when designing the program. Three grantees said that they added or made changes to soft skills training over the course of

the grant period. One employer indicated that there was a false perception that soft skills were not important in H-1B occupations.

- **Participants' Personal Problems.** As discussed in Chapter 4, participants had several barriers that interfered with training completion. Some of these barriers also posed challenges to job placement. Nine grantees mentioned that some program completers simply did not look for jobs because of lack of self-confidence or family crises. Eight grantees indicated that lack of transportation was a challenge because jobs were not located near participants' homes or that work hours in the target occupations, such as nursing, were in the evening when public transportation was not available.

"They don't have the qualifications. We are looking for the exception to the rule, we are looking for employers who will waive their usually requirements of 3 to 4 years' experience in IT and bachelor's degree."

—Grantee

Source: Grantee interviews

- **Employers Were Seeking Candidates with More Skills and Experience.** As discussed in Chapter 4, some participants had difficulty passing exams needed to work in the chosen occupation. When asked specifically about challenges related to job placement, five grantees said that participants' ability to earn certifications was a barrier to employment. This was most common among healthcare programs, where participants had difficulty passing state licensure exams. One program attributed this at least in part to lack of test-taking experience or testing anxiety on the part of participants. In addition, six grantees and three employers said that they wanted to hire candidates with more experience, either through longer internships or on-the-job experience, or they simply have a greater demand for mid-career professionals than entry-level workers. This is consistent with the finding in Chapter 4 that the trainings were sometimes for a lower skills level than what was needed by employers. To identify employers willing to hire entry-level candidates, one grantee in IT began looking at IT-related jobs in banking and other fields and found these employers more interested in entry-level workers than many IT companies.
- **Employers Were Reluctant to Enter into Hiring or Interview Agreements.** Only four grantees reported that employers committed to hiring participants, six grantees said employers committed to interviewing participants, and three grantees said that employers

"So we did not even push that with our training providers, because we know they have relationships. Don't tamper with that, because employers can go elsewhere to find their people. That's the approach. And they then, as a result, the training operators have been funneling people into jobs successfully. So it's like don't mess with success."

—Grantee on getting commitments from employers to hire program completers

Source: Grantee interviews

made commitments but backed out. The interviews revealed some possible reasons why employers did not want to make agreements. Four grantees said that they believed employers had trepidation about working with minorities and low-income individuals and that this made it difficult for participants to secure interviews. Two grantees said that while employers enjoyed the opportunity to have free, part-time help through internships, they were less interested in providing careers for participants. One grantee said that employers did not want to make any legally binding agreements for fear of legal action if the employer subsequently decided not to interview or hire participants. Grantees developed strategies to engage employers. One grantee developed the reverse job fair discussed above as a way to engage employers

who were hesitant to make commitments. Another grantee said that they relied on existing relationships between employers and training providers rather than recruit employers as they believed that pressuring employers to hire program completers would be unsuccessful.

- **Difficulty Keeping Track of Participants.** Three grantees mentioned that participants often dropped out of contact after completing the program. This made it difficult both for programs to determine whether graduates were employed and to offer services to help with finding and retaining employment. One grantee offered an incentive for graduates to check in with the program 6 months after graduation and found higher rates of communication as a result. Another grantee said that they introduced the three-person case management team, which included an eligibility and enrollment specialist, career counselor, and employment specialist, at the time of enrollment rather than as participants progressed through the program and believed that this increased the number of completers contacting the program to tell them about a job.

"[I]f I was hiring for like a tier two or tier three-level technician, and so I'm looking at a pool of people who have like 5 years' experience or 3 to 5 years' experience already as a level one or level two, obviously, that's going to trump someone who's just coming in with no industry experience like technical training. So I mean you can't really compare. It's like apples and oranges. But if I had it amongst entry-level positions, I would definitely say the program is providing candidates that are a step above."

—Employer

Source: Partner interviews

8. Conclusions

The objective of the H-1B TechHire Partnership Grants and SWFI was to help reduce demand for foreign labor by training domestic workers for jobs in middle- and high-skill H-1B occupations. Both of these programs funded organizations to make training more accessible to individuals with barriers to training, to provide supportive services to address the unique and varied challenges of individuals with barriers, and to offer a range of innovative approaches to training, including accelerated and online options. In this chapter, we provide an overview of the key findings, lessons learned, sustainability plans of grantees, and next steps for the evaluation.

8.1 Key Implementation Findings

In this report, we examined implementation of key components of the grant programs. In this section, we highlight the key findings across sections.

Partnerships

- ***Grantees reported successes working with partners, including workforce investment system organizations, education and training providers, and employers to provide training and supportive services to participants. Despite these successes, employer engagement in program design and hiring did not always materialize as planned.***

Workforce investment organizations helped recruit participants, leverage funds for training and supportive services, and promote regional economic collaboration. Education and training providers helped expand training opportunities for participants. Employers helped to design programs and shape the curriculum to increase employment opportunities for participants. These partnerships were mutually beneficial. For workforce investment system organizations and education and training providers, the partnerships increased training options for their participants, increased their capacity to serve, and allowed them to target new populations. For employers, the partnerships provided a pipeline of applicants whose training was tailored to their specific needs.

Despite these perceived successes, employer engagement in some aspects of the program did not always materialize as planned. Five grantees and five employers said that more efforts were needed to engage employers in the program design and curriculum early in the grant. Beyond providing work-based learning and training for incumbent workers (front-line, low-skilled workers who need training to upgrade their skills), only half of grantees entered into agreements with employers to hire or interview program completers. As discussed below, four grantees reported that one factor that contributed to challenges engaging employers is that while the trainings were for entry-level jobs, the available job openings were often for mid-level jobs. Four grantees also reported that employers' unfamiliarity with the needs of low-income workers contributed to low employer engagement and lack of hiring. More intensive employer outreach, engaging employers early in the grant, and continuously soliciting feedback from employers were strategies that grantees used to ensure employer engagement throughout the grant.

Recruitment, Screening, and Assessment

- ***Recruitment of qualified applicants was a challenge for grantees due to the low unemployment rate during most of the grant. Youth and young adults ages 17 to 29 were especially difficult to recruit, and some grantees indicated interest in the program from older individuals who they believed were a better fit.***

More than half of grantees said that recruitment was a challenge. The tight labor market meant that potential participants were able to receive similar wages and benefits in occupations that did not require training. In addition, potential participants who were unemployed often had many barriers to employment which made training completion and employment difficult. About half of TechHire grantees experienced difficulty recruiting youth and young adults ages 17 to 29, as these participants were seen by grantees as either lacking in interest or motivation or in the basic skills to be successful in training. Seven TechHire grantees mentioned that they had many individuals ages 30 and older who were interested in the program but had to turn them away in order to meet the DOL target that 75 percent of individuals served were youth and young adults. These grantees indicated that older participants had the skills and experience to be successful in the more advanced trainings and were a better fit for the program. They felt that DOL should consider expanding the age range for the grant. As a result of these recruitment difficulties, 22 grantees did not meet their performance targets for the number of participants served.

Trainings

- ***Grantees varied in the extent to which the occupational training funded through the grants was similar to existing training programs.***

Eighteen grantees said that the occupational skills training they provided under the grant was distinct from existing training programs. In these cases, the distinctive features of the training programs included acceleration, work-based learning, or certifications. In contrast, 14 grantees said that the occupational skills training was the same or similar to existing training programs. The distinguishing feature of the TechHire and SWFI training programs in these cases was the availability of supportive and wraparound services.

- ***Flexible training approaches posed challenges. Short-term trainings were not always compatible with the level of skills required by available jobs. Similarly, online training was not a good fit for the circumstances of some participants.***

Six grantees and four employers said that short-term, accelerated training was too “basic” and did not equip participants with the occupational skills needed to obtain employment in H-1B industries. In addition, three grantees and one training provider said that it was difficult to retain participants for the duration of short-term trainings, despite the accelerated nature. Some participants, they said, want a quick path to employment and lack the financial security to remain outside the workforce while completing even a relatively short training program. The more intensive nature of the short-term programs made it even more difficult for participants to work during training.

Three grantees said they felt that the independent nature of learning online was not a good fit for low-income students and that competing priorities often took precedence when classes were online. Intensive case management and supports were needed if online learning was to be used. Two grantees also indicated that online training was incompatible with the occupations in which

participants were interested, including healthcare and advanced manufacturing, which required hands-on training components.

- ***Retention in the training programs was a challenge for grantees due to participants' lack of basic skills and personal barriers.***

While the programs were designed to provide supports to complete training, grantees experienced problems with retention in the training programs. Over 40 percent of grantees found it difficult to retain participants in training programs. The reasons for low retention according to grantees was that participants struggled academically with the training material as well as personal barriers. Twelve grantees had difficulty identifying and recruiting applicants who they believed possessed the academic skills required to be successful in the training programs. According to 11 grantees, some participants lacked interest or motivation in the training or enrolled and subsequently realized that the training was not the right fit. Other participants had barriers that made training completion difficult including the immediate need for employment, dependent care, transportation, and housing.

- ***Passing credential exams was a challenge for some grantees. Some participants did not understand that exams were required or how difficult the materials would be.***

Twelve grantees mentioned challenges related to participants passing exams. Two grantees mentioned that some participants did not understand that they needed to pass a licensure exam to work in the occupation for which they were trained—that completing the training and getting the certificate of completion was insufficient. Two other grantees mentioned that the compressed nature of the training courses left little time for participants to study for the exam outside of the course and that participants became disengaged when there was a time lag between training and the exam.

To overcome these challenges, grantees tried several solutions which they believed were successful, including administering tests at the same location as the training classes (two grantees), exam prep classes or study groups (three grantees), offering mentors (one grantee) and encouraging training providers to become testing providers (one grantee). The grantees believed that this reduced drop-off between completion of training and sitting for the exam. Other strategies included offering exam prep classes and study groups. Finally, rather than offering the training straight through, one grantee split the training course into two courses and had participants take the relevant part of the exam after each class. They believed that this strategy led to an increase in the number of participants passing the exam.

- ***There was a mismatch between the level of the training and the skills required for available jobs. The trainings were for entry-level jobs, whereas employers were seeking entry-level candidates with work experience or candidates for mid-level positions.***

There was a discrepancy between the skill level of the intended training to “train workers with the skills required for *well-paying, middle- and high-skilled*, and high-growth jobs,” as described in the Funding Opportunity Announcements for TechHire and SWFI, and the relatively low level of skill provided by the training offered. Six grantees and three employers reported that some participants could not find jobs because employers were seeking candidates with higher skill levels and credentials or more work experience. They were looking for mid-level rather than entry-level candidates. Notably, “well-paying” and “middle- and high-skilled jobs” are not defined in the

Funding Opportunity Announcement for TechHire and SWFI, and some programs made clear in their applications that they would be training people for entry-level positions.

As discussed, participant barriers played a role in training completion outcomes even for entry-level trainings, and some participants could not complete even the short-term trainings because of the need to work. Grantees that did have higher level trainings reported difficulties recruiting participants with the basic skills needed to complete those trainings.

Supportive Services

- ***Case management was one of the most valuable components of the programs according to grantees.***

One-quarter of grantees used a case management approach to deliver supportive services. Similar to the ways that a job coach or counselor assesses participants and helps place them in a job, case managers assess participants upon enrollment and help place them in trainings and connect them with supports. Case managers typically worked with participants throughout the duration of their training. The connection with a case manager typically began at intake with the development of an individualized service plan that listed long-term and short-term goals and any barriers a participant might face to completing training and obtaining employment. From there, the case manager would help connect participants to supportive services to mitigate those barriers and help them determine the appropriate training track. Throughout their involvement in the training program, case managers checked in periodically with participants via email, telephone, and in-person meetings to monitor their progress and need for services. However, five grantees said that participants continued to have access to case management services even if they needed to temporarily pause their training or after they found jobs. The hope was that continuing to offer support to participants while they grappled with challenging life circumstances would enable them to resume their training later on.

Child Care and Systems Change

- ***Grantees considered SWFI grant money as the funding source “of last resort” to use only when needed to fill gaps in existing child care service provision.***

It was necessary for SWFI grantees to patch together child care services for children’s specific developmental needs and for different phases of parental career development. Subsidized child care resources available in grantees’ communities had eligibility requirements or waiting periods that meant that no one child care resource in the community could serve all participants’ needs, or even one participant’s needs at all times. When participants’ child care needs could not be satisfied by another existing program, due to long wait lists, lack of eligibility of child or parent, lack of after-hours care, etc., 11 grantees utilized SWFI funds to pay for participants’ child care. For some participants, SWFI funds were the first funds accessed. For example, parents who did not qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) sometimes received SWFI funds to subsidize child care. In other circumstances, grantees used SWFI funds to pick up child care costs once the participant had “maxed out” other resources, or the child had “aged-out.” Some participants received SWFI funds to pay for child care for the early period of their training program or employment while their application to the state for subsidized child care was being processed.

- ***Child care systems navigation was essential to assisting parent participants in identifying appropriate child care and accessing subsidies.***

Grantees sometimes embedded a specific “navigator” in their organizations, but other possibilities were to spread “navigation” duties across career counselors, or to refer parent participants to a partner that provided navigation. How grantees accomplished navigation depended upon a number of variables: (1) the availability of other child care navigation resources in the community; (2) the extent to which participants qualified for subsidized programs (that is, how frequently did participants fall in the “gaps” necessitating additional effort to locate resources?); and (3) the ease with which participants may identify or access care on their own due to advertising, eligibility requirements, and bureaucracy.

- ***Grantees reported success bridging the workforce system and child care systems and working with child care providers to alter their services to accommodate participants’ needs. However, grantees experienced less success convincing employers to accommodate participants’ child care needs.***

Grantees worked with the public workforce system and training providers to provide a “one-stop shop” for training and child care and increase access to subsidies. Grantees worked with child care providers to help them clear code violations and increase liability coverage so that they could receive child care subsidies for minding participants’ children. They were also able to streamline payment and application processes. One area of success working with the workforce system was in co-locating training and child care. However, it is not clear if these arrangements will persist without SWFI funding. Three grantees indicated they had provided consultations about child care needs to employers. In some cases, grantees were able to advocate on behalf of individual participants with employers. However, systemic change to how employers accommodate low-income (and especially, single) parents, is still elusive. Grantees reported little success persuading employers to accommodate participants’ child care needs, such as adjusting work hours to times that childcare is available.

Job Placement

- ***Grantees experienced challenges placing participants into jobs. Grantees attributed these challenges to participants’ lack of soft skills, participants’ barriers such as lack of transportation, and a mismatch between the level of the training and the skills demanded by employers.***

Only four grantees indicated that employers committed to hiring or interviewing participants, and three grantees said that employers made commitments but backed out. Grantees and employers identified a lack of soft skills as the most common reason that program completers did not get hired. Some participants could not find jobs because they lacked transportation (some jobs were not located near participants’ homes, or work hours were in the evening when public transportation was not available). As discussed above, some participants did not get jobs because the level of the training did not match the available positions. Six grantees and three employers said that employers were looking for more experienced candidates with a higher level of skills than program completers. Five grantees said that difficulties experienced by participants earning certifications was a barrier to employment, which was attributed at least in part to lack of test-taking experience or testing anxiety on the part of participants.

- ***Despite these challenges, employers who did hire program completers were satisfied with the hires’ occupational skills, though lack of soft skills was still a challenge.***

While some employers may have been looking for candidates with more experience, those that did hire program completers were generally satisfied. In interviews, all 11 employers interviewed provided positive feedback about program completers' occupational skills and noted that completers had more motivation than other applicants because they took the initiative to seek out and complete the program, which was difficult given their backgrounds. However, employers' opinions on the soft skills of program completers were less positive. Employers generally attributed the lack of soft skills to a failure to impart the skills on the part of the program.

8.2 Plans for Sustainability

DOL intended for grantees to continue the core partnerships and training services after the grants end. In the third year of the grant, 31 percent of grantees indicated that they had developed a written sustainability plan. Despite plans to sustain the programs, few had secured the funding needed to continue the programs by the end of the third year. Roughly three-quarters of all grantees indicated that “insufficient funding” or a “lack of resources” presented either a moderate or a major challenge to sustainability. In interviews, grantees indicated that they had not begun actively applying for funding but planned to do so in their final year.

To make the programs sustainable without new funding, grantees planned to make changes to the training and/or supportive services. One grantee planned to continue to offer training but eliminate flexible scheduling. Another grantee indicated that they would continue to provide navigators to help participants find child care but would not fund child care or supportive services. Conversely, it was sometimes necessary to make changes that would make the programs more attractive to new funders, such as expanding the target populations or target industries. One grantee said that they would continue to offer training but change the target occupations based on updated labor market information and feedback from employers. Another grantee planned to expand the target population to include participants ages 30 and older due to interest among this group.

In the partner survey, more than 80 percent of partners said that they would continue to be involved in the program after the grant ended. Notably, each employer partner interviewed expressed a desire for the program to continue, saying that it provided them with promising staff.

Enabling Participants to Finish the Program

Despite plans to discontinue their program, Memphis Bioworks laid plans to try to ensure that some assistance will continue through the state. Staff had observed that nursing students typically ran through the financial assistance they received from Pell grants and other sources around the time that their fourth semester began, and the TechHire grant had been providing financial assistance to those students as they completed their training. Knowing that the TechHire grant would end within a year, the grantee staff wrote letters in 2019 to the Governor of Tennessee and the State Workforce Commissioner to request that the state step in to bridge the funding gap and allow those students to finish training. Staff said they do not yet know the outcome of their efforts.

Source: Grantee interviews

8.3 Next Steps for the Evaluation

In the first 3 years of implementation, grantees were successful in developing partnerships to provide training and supportive services to participants. However, the grantees encountered some challenges including retaining participants in the training programs and placing participants into jobs. The extent to which these challenges influenced the economic impacts of the programs is an open question. Future reports will present the implementation and impact findings from the RCT grantees, which will illuminate the effectiveness of the programs in improving participants' employment and earnings outcomes. These reports will provide a complete picture of the grant programs' outcomes and help DOL assess whether the grant programs met their goals of helping individuals with barriers access career pathways in H-1B industries and occupations.

References

- Acs, G., and Nichols, A. (2007). *Low-income workers and their employers: Characteristics and challenges*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Adams, G.C., Spaulding, S., and Heller, C. (2015). *Bridging the gap: Exploring the intersection of workforce development and child care*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2020). Computer and information technology occupations. In *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at: [bls.gov](https://www.bls.gov).
- Child Care Aware of America. (2016). *Parents and the high cost of child care*. Arlington, VA: Author.
- Eyster, L., Callan, T., and Adams, G. (2014). *Balancing school, work, and family: Low-income participation in education and training*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Fuller, J.B., Burrowes, J., Raman, M., Restuccia, D., and Young, A. (2014). *Bridge the gap: Rebuilding America's middle skills*. Boston: Harvard Business School.
- Gebrekrstos, S. and Adams, G. (2019). *Do parents get child care assistance for education and training?* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Henly, J.R., and Adams, G. (2018). *Insights on access to quality child care for families with nontraditional work schedules*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Howell, D. (1997). *Institutional failure and the American worker: The collapse of low skill wages*. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Jerome Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.
- Minton, S., Tran, V., and Dwyer, K. (2019). *State child care assistance policies for parents in education and training*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., and Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America: 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- National Skills Coalition. (2016). *Building skills through SNAP employment and training: Recommendations from lessons learned in four states*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Schmitt, J., and Jones, J. (2012). *Low-wage workers are older and better educated than ever*. Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research.
- Smith, T., and Wilson, R. (2016). *Six effective approaches for TechHire initiatives: Lessons from the field*. Boston: Jobs For the Future.
- Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., Trubskyy, M., Ross, M., McHugh, W., and Palma, S. (2014). *The plummeting labor market fortunes of teens and young adults*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for Grant Applications for H-1B TechHire Partnership Grants" (FOA-ETA-16-01). Washington, DC: DOL, March 2016. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/grants/pdfs/FOA-ETA-16-01.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for the Strengthening Working Families Initiative" (FOA-ETA-16-05). Washington, DC: DOL, March 2016. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/grants/pdfs/FOA-ETA-16-05.pdf>

Appendix A

Supplementary Tables

Appendix A

Supplementary Tables

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Atlanta Technical College	TechHire	Fulton County (includes the City of Atlanta), Clayton County	Youth and young adults	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$3,670,000	425
Atlanta Workforce Development Agency	TechHire	City of Atlanta	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	450
Bridge Valley Community and Technical College	TechHire	Boone, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Mason, Putnam, and Wayne Counties	Youth and young adults	IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,999,857	400
Chippewa Valley Technical College	TechHire	33 counties in Western WI 1 county in IL 2 counties in IA 5 counties in MN (counties in other states do border WI)	Youth and young adults	IT, Advanced Manufacturing, and Broadband	Education and Training Provider	\$5,000,000	525

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Citadel Community Development Corporation	TechHire	Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino County (Azusa, Bloomington, Chino, Colton, Corona, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Hemet, Montclair, Moreno Valley, Norco, Ontario, Pomona, Rialto, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Jacinto, Upland)	Criminal Records	Advanced Manufacturing, IT and Financial Services	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	340
Clackamas Community College	TechHire	Clackamas County (Oregon City, Canby, Estacada, Molalla, Sandy, Boring, Wilsonville, West Linn, Lake Oswego, Damascus, Happy Valley, Gladstone, Milwaukie, and Tualatin) Multnomah and Washington Counties (Portland, Hillsboro, Gresham, Tigard, Beaverton, Aloha, Troutdale, Fairview, Maywood Park, Wood Village, Sherwood, Cornelius, North Plains, Banks, Gaston, King City, Durham, and Laurelwood)	Youth and young adults	Health Care and IT	Education and Training Provider	\$3,542,868	508

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)							
Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.	TechHire	State of Maine	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	500
Daytona State College	TechHire	9 counties along upper east coast of FL	Youth and young adults	IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,743,714	400
Employ Milwaukee	TechHire	Milwaukee, WI St. Louis, MO Cincinnati, OH	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	400
Everett Community College	TechHire	Snohomish County, King County	Youth and young adults	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,880,012	703
Exceptional Family Center	TechHire	Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties, CA	Disabled	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,997,504	450
Flying HIGH Inc.	TechHire	Mahoning, Trumbull, Columbiana Counties	Criminal Records	Health care and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	3,999,999	400
Full Employment Council, Inc.	TechHire	Clay, Platte, Cass, Ray and Jackson counties. All are contiguous counties in the NW region (bordering KS) of the state of Missouri; a mix of urban and suburban spaces	Youth and young adults	Health Care, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$5,000,000	2,000
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.	TechHire	Ustin Texas, Central Ohio, and Roanoke, VA	Youth and young adults	IT	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	702

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Indiana AFL-CIO Labor Institute for Training, Inc.	TechHire	Indiana	English as a Second Language	Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,241,897	400
Ivy Tech Community College	TechHire	35 Indiana counties, including, Lake, Porter, Allen, Marion, Hamilton, and Vanderburgh. These include the cities Gary, Hammon, East Chicago, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Evansville	Youth and young adults	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$2,622,679	500
James Sprunt Community College	TechHire	Duplin, Halifax, Northampton, Alamance, Vance, Granville, Franklin, and Warren Counties, North Carolina	Youth and young adults, English as a Second Language, Criminal Records	Health Care, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,996,000	400
Jobs for the Future, Inc.	TechHire	Anne Arundel County, MD Howard County, MD New York City Prince George's County, MD Washington, DC	Youth and young adults	IT	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$5,000,000	580
Miami Dade College	TechHire	Miami-Dade County	Youth and young adults	Health Care, IT and Financial Services	Education and Training Provider	\$3,552,308	415

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Midlands Technical College	TechHire	Fairfield, Lexington, and Richland counties. Adjacent counties in middle of state, and includes the capitol city	Youth and young adults	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$4,000,000	400
Montgomery College	TechHire	Montgomery County, MD	English as a Second Language	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$4,000,000	400
Mount Wachusett Community College	TechHire	Worcester, Middlesex, Essex counties	Youth and young adults	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,999,995	400
North Central Texas College	TechHire	Cooke, Denton, Montague, and Young Counties in North Texas	Youth and young adults	IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,995,180	450
Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board	TechHire	71 cities across 4 counties in Northeast CT served by NRWIB and Workforce Alliance, covering nearly half of CT	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	400
Pellissippi State Community College	TechHire	Anderson, Blount, Grainger, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Roane, Sevier, and Union Counties	Youth and young adults	IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,812,526	420
Polk State College	TechHire	Polk County	Criminal Records	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$2,122,806	325

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Research Foundation of CUNY on behalf of LaGuardia Community College	TechHire	New York, NY (all five boroughs)	Youth and young adults	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$3,957,792	425
Seattle Central College	TechHire	Seattle (King County)	Youth and young adults, Criminal Records	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$3,792,765	765
State Technical College of Missouri	TechHire	Jefferson City and Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Howard, Laclede, Maries, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties	Criminal Records	Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$2,765,073	325
Suffolk County Community College	TechHire	Suffolk and Nassau Counties, NY (Long Island)	Youth and young adults	IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$2,949,137	355
Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance, Inc. dba CareerSource Tampa Bay	TechHire	7 counties surrounding Tampa (gulf coast, midway)	Youth and young adults	Health Care and IT	Workforce development system organization	\$3,796,320	1,175
The Westchester County Department of Social Services	TechHire	The lower Hudson Valley, NY counties – Westchester, Putnam and Rockland	Youth and young adults, Criminal Records	Health Care, IT, Life Science, and Advanced Manufacturing	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	400

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
UAW-Labor Employment and Training Corporation	TechHire	Los Angeles County	Youth and young adults	Health Care, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing	Workforce development system organization	\$3,930,000	
United Migrant Opportunity Services/UMOS, Inc.	TechHire	8 counties in mostly SE part of Wisconsin (not all next to each other)	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$3,996,197	400
Wake Technical Community College	TechHire	Targets Wake, Durham and Johnston Counties (population-dense areas), but participation is open to citizens across NC for students enrolled in Wake/ Johnston/ Durham community colleges when that's not their county of residence	Youth and young adults	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$3,965,670	450
Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board, Inc.	TechHire	7 counties in Southeastern WI	Youth and young adults	Financial Services, Health Care, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	456

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Workforce Connection Of Central New Mexico	TechHire	Albuquerque city and across 4 counties: Counties: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia (all clustered in center of state and contain ~1/2 of state population)	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	450
Worksystems, Inc.	TechHire	Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon (adjacent counties in NW Oregon, includes Portland)	Youth and young adults	IT	Workforce development system organization	\$3,997,717	453
Youth Policy Institute	TechHire	LA County. Will target the LA Promise Zone and LA Promise Neighborhood (LAPN). Promise Zone includes Hollywood, East Hollywood, Thai Town, Little Armenia, Koreatown, and Pico Union/ Westlake. LAPN includes 2 communities-East Hollywood (part of the LA Promise Zone) and Pacoima in the San Fernando Valley.	Criminal Records, English as a Second Language, Disabled	IT	Education and Training Provider	\$4,000,000	400

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)							
Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
Action for Boston Community Development Inc.	SWFI	Boston, MA		IT, Health Care, and Financial Services	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,462,075	160
Alachua Bradford Regional Workforce Board, dba CareerSource	SWFI	Alachua and Bradford counties FL		IT	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	250
City of Long Beach, Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Net	SWFI	City of Long Beach, CA		IT and Health Care	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	400
City of Phoenix	SWFI	Phoenix, AZ		IT, Health Care, and Financial Services	Workforce development system organization	\$4,000,000	600
Community College of Aurora	SWFI	Aurora and Denver, CO		IT, Health Care, and Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$3,969,442	712
Family Footprint	SWFI	Greenville and Laurens counties, SC		Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	718
Memphis Bioworks Foundation	SWFI	Tennessee counties of Fayette, Lauderdale, Shelby, Tipton		IT, Health Care, and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,984,433	517
Moore Community House	SWFI	Mississippi Counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson		Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,545,949	840
OAI Inc.	SWFI	Cook County, IL		IT, Health Care, and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,999,981	300

Exhibit A-1. Grantee characteristics (continued)

Grantee	Program	Service area	Target population	Target industries	Grantee organization type	Grant amount	Target enrollment
OIC of Broward, dba OIC of South Florida	SWFI	Broward County FL		IT and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	400
Rochester Rehabilitation Center	SWFI	Rochester, NY		IT, Health Care, and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	1,000
The WorkPlace	SWFI	Southwestern, CT (Fairfield County and parts of New Haven County)		Health Care	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$3,432,200	1,500
Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley, Inc.	SWFI	Virginia counties of Roanoke, Floyd, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski/cities of Radford, Salem, and Roanoke		IT, Health Care, and Advanced Manufacturing	Business-related nonprofit organization	\$4,000,000	350
Vermont Technical College	SWFI	State of Vermont		Advanced Manufacturing	Education and Training Provider	\$4,000,000	400

Exhibit A-2. Existing partnership prior to grant, grantees by partnership type

Type of organization	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Business related organization	11	87.5	4	100
Workforce investment system	16	81.9	6	94.4
Education and training provider	14	54.3	9	63.8
Employer	18	53.2	1	37.5
Child care provider	n.a.	n.a.	4	40.7

Notes: Education and Training Provider (TechHire N=21; SWFI N=10), Employer (TechHire N=21; SWFI N=2), Workforce Investment System (TechHire N=17; SWFI N=6), Business Related Organization (TechHire N=12; SWFI N=4), Child Care Provider (SWFI N=4), Other (TechHire N=12; SWFI N=4).

Source: Partner Survey, A6

Exhibit A-3. Use of assessment tools

Assessment tool	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)	16	44	7	58
WorkKeys	9	25	3	25
ACCUPLACER	9	25	2	17
COMPASS	5	14	0	0
CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems)	5	14	2	17
Other	10	28	5	42
None of the above	5	14	0	0

Notes: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=12.

Source: Grantee Survey, E8

Exhibit A-4. Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	TechHire		Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Gender				
Male	12,914	65.2	750	13.8
Female	6,884	34.8	4,675	86.2
Race and ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	7,585	41.1	950	18.0
Black, non-Hispanic	5,950	32.2	2,832	53.7
Hispanic, any race	3,312	17.9	1,217	23.1
Any other race, non-Hispanic	1,621	8.8	279	5.3
Age				
17 to 29	14,474	72.6	2,457	45.2
30 and older	5,463	27.4	2,976	54.8
Education				
Less than high school	1,283	6.5	323	6.0
High school diploma or equivalent	10,130	51.0	3,260	60.0
Some college or technical	5,074	25.5	1,429	26.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,384	17.0	419	7.7
Individual with a disability				
Yes	1,260	6.9	174	3.4
No	16,935	93.1	4,943	96.6
Individual with limited English proficiency				
Yes	1,507	7.9	385	7.3
No	17,472	92.1	4,873	92.7
Individual with a criminal record				
Yes	1,439	8.7	483	9.5
No	15,154	91.3	4,618	90.5
Eligible veteran or spouse				
Yes	873	4.4	133	2.5
No	19,029	95.6	5,299	97.6
Low income				
Yes	8,883	47.5	4,616	86.3
No	9,813	52.5	734	13.7
Employed at entry				
Yes	9,217	46.2	2,419	44.5
No	10,720	53.8	3,014	55.5
Underemployed				
Yes	4,496	24.1	1,766	33.4
No	14,125	75.9	3,525	66.6
Long-term unemployed				
Yes	2,828	14.2	980	18.0
No	17,109	85.8	4,453	82.0
Incumbent worker				
Yes	2,981	15.0	145	2.7
No	16,956	85.1	5,288	97.3
Dislocated worker				
Yes	742	4.4	106	2.2
No	16,024	95.6	4,691	97.8

Note: Sample includes all 19,937 TechHire and 5,433 SWFI participants who enrolled by June 30, 2020. Percentages are out of nonmissing data.

Source: Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) data as of June 30, 2020.

Exhibit A-5. Policies for individuals in need of basic skills classes

Policy	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
We do not accept them in our program	10	29	2	15
We provide basic skills instruction in the program, integrated into the training classes	9	26	3	23
We provide basic skills instruction in the program, in classes taken independently of the training class and offered by partner organizations	8	23	3	23
We provide basic skills instruction in the program, in classes taken independently of the training class and offered by our program	7	19	5	38
Other	1	3	0	0

Notes: TechHire N=35, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, F8

Exhibit A-6. Description of the range of training options offered by the grantee

Training offered	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Trainings that result in industry-recognized certifications or credentials	36	100	12	92
Trainings that help participants get onto a career pathway that allows for future advancement	32	89	11	85
Trainings that result in stackable certifications or credentials	32	89	9	69
Trainings that result in portable certifications or credentials	29	81	8	62
Trainings with multiple entry/exit points to accommodate participants of different skill levels	24	67	6	46

Notes: TechHire N=36, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, F4

Exhibit A-7. Timing of availability of supportive services

Timing	TechHire		SWFI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
While participants are receiving the training	28	80	11	85
After participants enroll in the program, but before training begins	26	74	10	78
After participants have completed the training program	19	54	6	46

Notes: TechHire N=35, SWFI N=13.

Source: Grantee Survey, G2