



NEW MOMS

IMPLEMENTING AN EXECUTIVE SKILLS APPROACH

INSIGHTS FOR THE FIELD

This case study describes how an innovative workforce development program and social enterprise is integrating brain and behavioral science research into practical strategies for staff and participants.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	3
Opening	6
A FOCUS ON EXECUTIVE SKILLS	6
KEY COMPONENTS OF THIS APPROACH	6
HOW THIS APPROACH GOT STARTED AND SUPPORTED AT NEW MOMS	7
Part One How the Executive Skills Approach is Used Along Participant Pathway	9
Part Two How the Approach is Integrated into Workforce Development	13
HOW ARE THE FIVE COMPONENTS INTEGRATED AND WHAT'S BEING LEARNED?	13
WHAT EFFECT HAS THIS APPROACH HAD ON PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF?	22
Part Three How the Approach has Evolved and Expanded throughout New Moms	25
HOW IS THE APPROACH REFLECTED IN THE MINDSET OF THE AGENCY?	25
HOW IS THE APPROACH SPREADING THROUGH THE AGENCY?	26
Closing: A Reflection for the Field	33
APPENDIX A Executive Skills Defined	35
APPENDIX B Key Terms	37
APPENDIX C About This Case Study	38

Summary

Over the last several years, our nation's workforce development sector, and broader human service sector, have paid increased attention to the implications of brain and behavioral science for policies and programs. Programs are testing new approaches and sharing their insights with the field.¹

A particular focus has been on executive skills, the cognitive abilities that support us in many aspects of our day-to-day lives: 1) How we organize and plan; 2) How we react to things; and 3) How we get things done.² Executive skills develop throughout childhood and young adulthood; research suggests that they are “malleable, and can strengthen depending on how much they are practiced.”³

This case study recounts the work of **New Moms**, an innovative agency that supports the success of young mothers. They provide services to help stabilize families and alleviate the effects of toxic stress. Over the last few years, New Moms has thoughtfully studied research on executive skills and applied that research to their workforce development program and social enterprise, Bright Endeavors (a candle-making company that provides paid transitional job training and skill development for young mothers).



¹ Visit www.EFWorksLibrary.org for a wealth of resources on Executive Function Skills, behavioral science, coaching and more. The site also features various program applications, models, and examples.

² The framing and definitions of executive skills in this case study come from influential work of Dr. Dick Guare.

³ Harvard University Center for the Developing Child. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/>

The Executive Skills (ES) approach embraces five key components: Environmental Modifications, Executive Skills Knowledge, Coaching, Goal Tracking, and Incentives. New Moms' years of practical experience suggests that a comprehensive approach can have a positive, empowering effect on workforce development participants and staff in many ways. To highlight a few:

- This approach focuses program designers and implementers on **environmental modifications** that can minimize barriers, reduce stressors, and increase the likelihood of participant success. Modifications made to the physical space, processes, materials, technology, and tasks need not be costly or complicated to improve goal attainment.
- This approach heightens self-awareness of both staff and participants. **Knowing** and **sharing profiles** about their own executive skills allows them to better tap strengths, accommodate struggles, and support one another. It also deepens the connection among staff and participants.
- This approach provides staff with a powerful framework for **coaching**, which relies on a fundamental belief in the potential of all people and a common language to support clear communication. In this way, coaching becomes a mindset rather than a process.
- The approach focuses staff and participants on setting short-term, meaningful, and achievable goals, while **tracking progress** over time on more complex life goals. Embracing this approach means continually experimenting with processes and materials to find what works for participants.
- Finally, the approach encourages experimentation with **incentives** that remove barriers, provide support to overcome obstacles, and celebrate effort put into goal attainment.

The approach has taken root in workforce development and expanded across the agency, through development and communications, housing, and family support. New Moms' experience suggests that integrating this approach effectively relies on a number of factors: trust from leadership; a core team of committed staff; curiosity about the research and integrity in translating the research into programs and policies; a comprehensive effort to educate staff; and opportunities for staff to connect to the learning. New Moms' experience also suggests the importance of keeping an open mind about what is and isn't working and being willing to try new approaches.

New Moms is experimenting with ways to capture data on quantifiable indicators (e.g. increases in program and job retention and decreases in parenting stress) that reflect the value of this approach. However, the effects of this approach cannot – and should not – be separated from the broader workforce development effort. An executive skills approach does not stand outside of a program – it provides designers and staff with a lens to examine and strengthen all aspects of a program. A focus on ES remains key to the work of New Moms. This ES approach is now being integrated into a broader strategy, Family-Centered Coaching, that New Moms has embraced. This case study can offer insights and inspiration to other programs considering how to incorporate a focus on executive skills.

A Case Study, Toolkit, and Video

The **Opening** of this case study reviews the key, interdependent components of an ES approach. We see how early support from internal leaders and external consultants allows staff to develop creative applications of brain and behavioral science in their unique program.

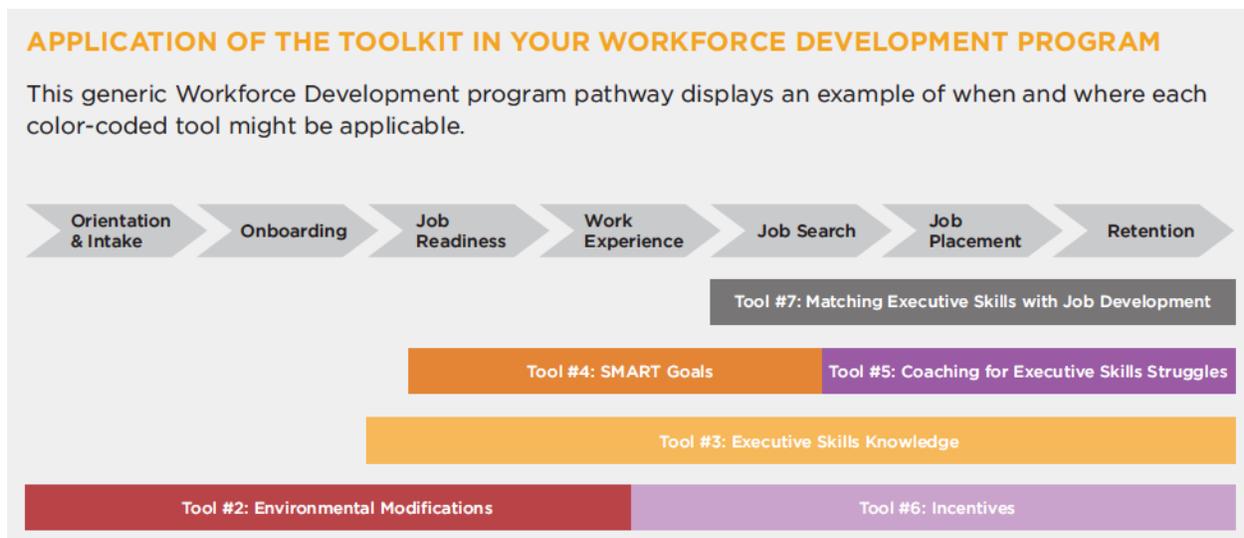
Part One reviews the **PATHWAY** participants follow in New Moms' workforce development program. Exploring this pathway underscores the value of introducing participants to the key components of an ES approach early on and reinforcing them throughout their journey.

Part Two examines the approach's five components, highlighting examples of how New Moms integrated each into their workforce development program.

Part Three highlights how this approach has evolved into a broader "Family-Centered Coaching" (FCC) framework and how leaders can work together to weave the principles and practices of FCC into an organization's culture.

The final section offers **closing insights** for the field.

Along with this case study, New Moms has compiled a toolkit for programs interested in initiating or expanding an ES approach. The **TOOLKIT** offers resources for staff of workforce development programs (as well as other human service programs) to help implement an ES approach. It also includes examples of materials that New Moms uses with participants. As illustrated in the graphic, below, the kit includes seven tools that programs may apply at different points along their participants' pathway, the first of which is a readiness assessment.



We also created a short, 7 minute **VIDEO** that describes the five components of an ES approach, with examples of how they are integrated at New Moms. Use the video to introduce the approach to stakeholders, inspire colleagues, or guide staff's own implementation vision.

Opening

A FOCUS ON EXECUTIVE SKILLS

Executive skills (ES) are the cognitive abilities that make it possible to set and achieve goals, regulate impulses, and complete the steps necessary to achieve objectives.⁴ One helpful way to think about these skills is in three groupings: 1) How we organize and plan things; 2) How we react to things; and 3) How we get things done.⁵ See **Appendix A** for ES Definitions.

Executive skills develop throughout childhood and into our mid-to-late 20s. Fascinating ongoing research suggests that “these skills and the brain regions that support them are malleable, and can strengthen depending on how much they are practiced.”⁶ A focus on ES can be especially important in programs designed for people whose executive skills are still being shaped. Knowing our ES strengths and struggles even as adults is valuable because it allows us to focus on goals that align with our strengths and use strategies and supports that accommodate our struggles. In the context of workforce development efforts, a focus on ES can support both professional and personal growth.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THIS APPROACH

As illustrated by Figure 1, New Moms has implemented a robust ES approach including five key components: Environmental Modifications, ES Knowledge, Coaching, Goal Tracking, and Incentives.⁷ Each component is briefly described below – and in depth in **Part Two**.

Environmental Modifications. Environmental Modifications are “ways to change a situation or a task itself to make it easier to complete in light of predictable challenges and could include changes to the physical environment, policies and procedures, written materials/methods of communications, as well as tasks.”⁸ Individual modifications are strategies that we employ to help us accomplish our goals. For example, a

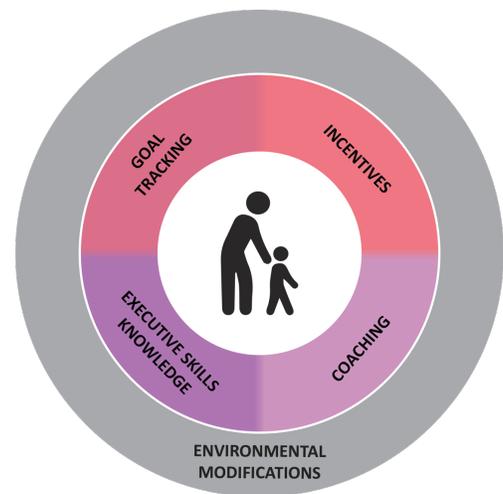


Figure 1: New Moms' Executive Skills Approach

⁴ Dechausay, N. 2018. “The Future of Executive Skills Coaching and Behavioral Science in Programs that Serve Teens and Young Adults.” Center for Applied and Behavioral Science (CABS), MDRC.

⁵ The framing and definitions of executive skills in this case study come from influential work of Dr. Dick Guare. Dr. Dick Guare's recent publications include: *The Smart but Scattered Guide to Success*. Peg Dawson, Ed. D, & Richard Guare, Ph.D. The Guilford Press, 2016. *Smart but Scattered and Stalled*. Richard Guare, Ph.D., Colin Guare, MS, & Peg Dawson, Ed.D. The Guilford Press, 2019.

⁶ Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. developingchild.harvard.edu/science

⁷ These key components of an ES approach do not exist in isolation. They are mutually supportive and are all embedded alongside other key components of any successful workforce development effort.

⁸ Dechausay (2018).

parent might use a running shopping list on their phone to save money and time in the market. Group modifications are strategies that support a group. For example, a workplace or workforce program may establish a simple uniform to make it easier and less costly for participants to follow the dress code.

Executive Skill (ES) Knowledge. Being aware of our unique strengths and struggles – and being transparent about these with others – is a foundational component of an ES approach. At New Moms, both participants and staff assess their ES profiles and refer to them regularly.

Coaching. In an ES approach, staff are trained over time to effectively support and guide participants without being directive. At New Moms, the coaching approach is focused on accountability without judgment. Group coaching happens during job-readiness workshops, as well as at the Bright Endeavors social enterprise where participants work during the program.

Goal Tracking. SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) have been a core part of many workforce programs for years. Goal tracking uses ES skills and, over time, regular goal tracking helps build the ES “muscle.”⁹ In this ES approach, staff guide participants to move from long-term goals to short-term SMART goals and develop accompanying action plans. At New Moms, goals are central to the individual as well as working teams.

Incentives. In this approach, incentives are linked to goal achievement and coaching. When effective, incentives help participants focus on goals, overcome obstacles, and provide them with memorable rewards when their goal is achieved. New Moms has been experimenting with various approaches to incentives, getting input from participants along the way.

HOW THIS APPROACH GOT STARTED AND SUPPORTED AT NEW MOMS

The New Moms story began in 1983 when a Chicago-area woman began to distribute diapers and wipes to young mothers from the trunk of her car. Over more than 35 years, that revolutionary act has given rise to a community of people bound by their shared interest in supporting new mothers and their children thrive.

In 2016, The Annie E. Casey Foundation selected New Moms as one of three programs to participate in an Executive Skills Coaching (ESC) pilot.¹⁰ As part of this pilot, a leader in the field of executive skills, Dr. Dick Guare, provided training and support to New Moms staff. About a year after New Moms’ work with ESC began, the Casey Foundation invited specialists in behavioral economics from MDRC to offer their insights and support. They also reflected on how well-suited New Moms was to take on this approach.

New Moms’ unique programmatic approach is their social enterprise, Bright Endeavors – a

⁹ Pavetti, L. 2019. “GPDR/R: An Executive Function Informed Approach to Goal Achievement.” The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at www.EFWorksLibrary.com.

¹⁰ Since that early pilot, New Moms has stayed true to the original ESC frame while developing it further. The participant is still the center of the overall approach, and ES knowledge is a foundational piece. But, rather than see coaching as the “umbrella,” they see it as an ongoing, critical component, working alongside environmental modifications on many levels.

candle company that provides participants with a hands-on, paid transitional job.¹¹ As depicted in the chart on page 26 there is a tight connection between New Moms’ workforce development and social enterprise teams. These two teams took on this ES approach together so that participants’ experiences from day to day would be seamless and mutually-reinforcing.

New Moms was fertile ground for an ES approach for several reasons, as outlined below.

Leadership. Leadership was open to learning and trying new things. For example, New Moms’ Chief Program Officer studied the science behind an ES approach and began to directly train staff in this approach across the organization.

Philosophy. The philosophy of the ES approach fit well with the prevailing philosophy at New Moms – namely that young mothers need non-judgmental support to thrive. New Moms’ introduction to ES was reinforced by what they were learning from other growing bodies of research about scarcity and behavioral science.¹² They combined their insights into ES with a number of other evidence-based approaches such as: Motivational Interviewing,¹³ Visual Learning,¹⁴ Trauma-Informed Care, and Positive Youth Development.

Flexibility. New Moms enjoys the programmatic flexibility that comes with diverse funding sources. New Moms staff have been free to combine what they were learning from many different sources – and to experiment with what seemed to work well.

“The leaders were really instrumental in how successful the engagement was. They were very inspired by the concept of human centeredness. They wanted to move the needle in terms of the participants’ own outcomes and were willing to look hard at their own practices: What is it we could be doing that we are not doing now that would be more supportive for the participants?” – Nadine Dechausay, *previously with MDRC*

“I would have told you that we were doing ES skills before – but I see now we weren’t really doing that well! It was an ‘add-on’ ... but now it’s central. In our sector, we have a tendency to throw on a zillion philosophies – but we’ve now made this a central, organizing structure.” – Laura Zumdahl, *President and CEO*

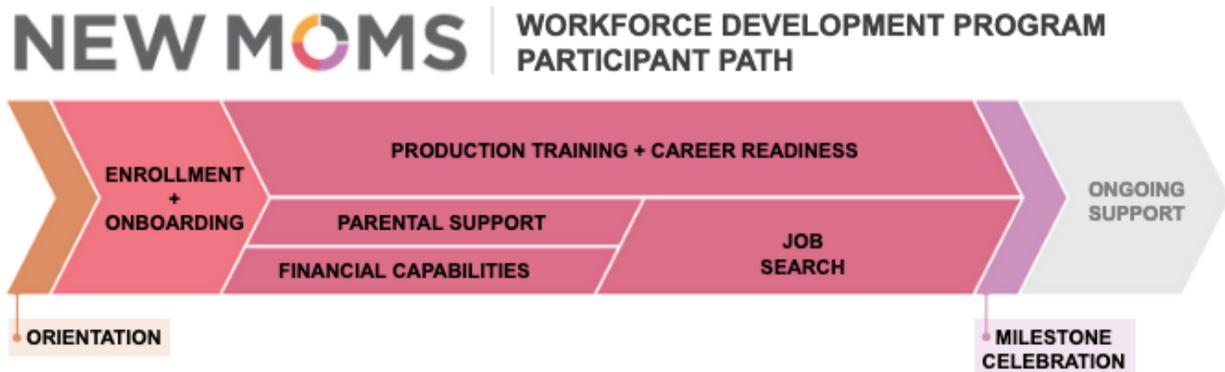
¹¹ A social enterprise is a lower-profit business that has a distinct social mission. Bright Endeavors began as “enterprising kitchen” in 2007 – one of the first social enterprises in the U.S. It was acquired by New Moms in 2010.

¹² For example, staff were invited to read Ideas 42 white paper “Poverty Interrupted” and to watch the video on adult capabilities produced by the Harvard Center for the Developing Child. www.ideas42.org/blog/project/poverty-interrupted

¹³ For example, New Moms engaged with Sarah Suzuki, MINT for Motivational Interviewing training, reflective supervision and case consultation with staff. motivationalinterviewing.org/profile/sarahsuzuki

¹⁴ New Moms staff visited “More than Words” in Boston, Mass. and applied a number of insights on the power of visuals to complement written text. mtwyouth.org

Part One | How the Executive Skills Approach is Used Along Participant Pathway



The graphic above depicts the journey that participants take through New Moms' workforce development program. The text below offers some examples of how women encounter the Executive Skill (ES) Approach throughout their journey.¹⁵

ORIENTATION

Eligible mothers attend an orientation session where they receive program information, and an introduction to core values. They also participate in an interview to assess program fit. In their application, candidates reflect on skills they want to work on.

Women are eligible for New Moms' 16-week paid Workforce Development program if they are 16-24 years old, pregnant¹⁶ or parenting, not attending school or currently employed, and live in Chicago or the near western suburbs.¹⁷

Orientation was the first place New Moms applied their insights from the field of behavioral science. For example, they began with modifications to make it easier for young mothers to attend by, for example, starting at 9:30 a.m. and eliminating the need for participants to attend more than once. They also revised the language of their text messages to encourage participants to attend, streamlined the content of the orientation so that it was motivating and substantive without being overwhelming, and highlighted program incentives (rather than focusing on what might get them kicked out). New Moms used a practical framework to guide their communications such as making important information more prominent.¹⁸

¹⁵ View a one-page overview of the participant path and where they experience the ES approach at newmoms.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Moms-WD-Participant-Path.pdf

¹⁶ Women more than 20 weeks pregnant are asked to enroll after the baby is born so that their experience at New Moms is not interrupted by the birth. In the meantime, they can engage with New Moms' doulas and other supports.

¹⁷ The program was 12 weeks in length when New Moms began their use of an ES approach. They expanded the program to 16 weeks for greater accountability and success.

¹⁸ Learn more about MDRC's SIMPLER framework at www.mdrc.org/publication/developing-simpler-solutions

“We focused on the Orientation strategy first since that seemed to give us the most immediate result of getting more people into the program. For example, we added a hands-on candle-making demonstration to the orientation, (informed by behavioral science). We also talked about payday and wages upfront, discussing the key pieces of the program or goals that were the most interesting to the moms (not us!). The improvements we made during the pilot made a huge difference in the number of women showing up for orientation.” – Dana Emanuel, *Director of Learning and Innovation*

At orientation, participants receive a packet with a welcome letter which introduces the TOP core values (Teamwork, Ownership, Professionalism) to support workplace success. They also receive an application with questions about their personal goals and the skills they want to build. The language of executive skills is not used at this time, but the skills are introduced and described so that participants think about them early on.

After orientation, participants are informed about their next step within 24 hours - and those who are accepted are given time and support to work on removing potential barriers to success, such as a lack of reliable childcare, before they start the program.

ENROLLMENT + ONBOARDING

Women selected for the program participate in one week of unpaid training. Throughout the week, staff observe participants’ ES skills and introduce ES concepts – not through a formal tool, but through conversation.

For most participants, this is their first job. While week one is unpaid, participants receive help with transportation, clothing, and household necessities. During this first week, participants:

- practice effective communication and build team spirit within the cohort;
- create and share vision boards that are posted for ongoing inspiration;
- are coached on how to set and track daily goals.

Throughout the training, staff observe participants’ executive skills and share their observations. For example, staff note that a mom struggling to find her paperwork may have challenges with organization and may benefit from extra support. Or a woman who doesn’t know others’ names by the end of the week may struggle with working memory.

CAREER READINESS + PRODUCTION TRAINING

For the next several months, participants engage in paid production training at the candle factory as well as career readiness workshops. The skills they build grow their capacity for any future career. Contextualized Literacy and Numeracy instruction is integrated throughout the program.

In the first week of **career readiness** programming, participants take part in an ES workshop and complete ES profiles that are posted on the production floor and used as reference. Staff use the profiles to develop teams that balance ES strengths and struggles on the production floor.

The ES approach has influenced **production training**, including modifying the environment to make it easier for individuals and teams to accomplish their goals, while building confidence. Modifications include simplified punch-in procedures, timers on wax pots, and better organization of the production floor. Coaches provide feedback and pose questions that help participants decide what to do when challenges arise. Production floor routines deepen their awareness of their executive skills.

The **Contextualized Numeracy and Literacy modules** are integrated throughout production training and career readiness and are informed by behavioral insights and curriculum-design best practice.¹⁹ The modules are geared to the participants' numeracy and literacy skill levels, and are used to build those skills by directly connecting them to what the participants are doing at Bright Endeavors.

PARENTAL SUPPORT

During the first weeks of production training, participants engage in a workshop series designed to reduce parental stress. Each Parental Support session focuses on evidence-based parenting techniques and supports ES skills.

This structured curriculum, based on the work of the Chicago Parent Program, combines video vignettes of real-life families with guided discussions of key parenting topics such as following routines, stress management, and rewards for children. New Moms' version of this curriculum includes lesson plans and outlines to highlight how each parenting skill builds specific executive skills in children.

FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES

Participants benefit from a series of workshops to build their Financial Capabilities. While not directly ES-informed, this curriculum draws on behavioral insights.

New Moms' financial capabilities curriculum²⁰ draws on behavioral design principles such as cutting excess costs and addresses issues of scarcity, barrier removal, and social influence.

¹⁹ New Moms modeled these modules off of the Heartland Human Care Services' FarmWorks Transitional Jobs Curriculum from Heartland Alliance. www.heartlandalliance.org/farmworks

²⁰ New Moms' Financial Capabilities is influenced greatly by the research presented by Ideas42 in their acclaimed white paper "Poverty, Interrupted." www.ideas42.org/blog/project/poverty-interrupted

JOB SEARCH

During the later weeks of Production Training, participants take part in practical job search sessions and employer visits.

For the latter half of the program, two days a week are devoted to job-search topics. Some sessions include field trips geared to prepare participants for successful long-term employment.

An evaluation is used at the start and end of the job search phase to guide participants through a professional assessment of their strengths as well as their areas of improvement.

CELEBRATION + ONGOING SUPPORT

The completion of this demanding program is marked by a memorable milestone celebration. New Moms continues to extend support to all graduates for up to two years.

Each milestone celebration reflects New Mom values: *Love, Grit, Hospitality, Empowerment, and Possibility*. During the celebration, participants reflect on their experience and their learning – both personal and work-related. Often, participants name the insights they gained into themselves – their own skill strengths, as well as their struggles – and how these insights have prepared them for success.

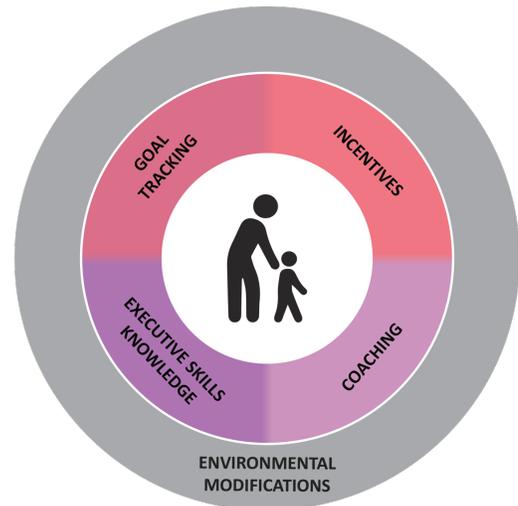
After completion, graduates can receive one-on-one coaching and are encouraged to share their job experiences with current program participants.



Part Two | How the Approach is Integrated into Workforce Development

HOW ARE THE FIVE COMPONENTS INTEGRATED AND WHAT'S BEING LEARNED?

In this part, we explore New Moms' lessons from implementing each component of the executive skills (ES) approach within their workforce development program.



ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATIONS

Over the last few years, New Moms has incorporated an array of environmental modifications in their processes, policies, procedures, physical space, technology, and visuals. In short, they constantly look for ways to make changes to support participants' success.

Technology and Messaging. Even before formally adopting this new approach, New Moms was intuitively taking action to support participants' goals. Originally, they sent text messages to remind participants to show up for meetings. The effectiveness of these messages was bolstered considerably when they began to use brain and behavioral science as a guide.²¹ New Moms' staff realized that they needed to be in touch often with participants, especially "just in time" contacts so women could immediately take a required action.

Materials. New Moms ensures that all materials are well-crafted and easy to understand. That includes making use of visuals and call-out boxes and using language at an appropriate reading level. (Early on, they discovered their materials were written at a 9th grade literacy level when the average literacy of their participants was at a 5th grade level.)

Policies and Procedures. New Moms is mindful of the household responsibilities these young women have in the early morning and late afternoon. They adjusted their start and stop times to respect that and strive to end on time.

Visuals and Physical Space. At Bright Endeavors, visual and written cues are used to streamline a process or cut down on mental overload. For example, at holiday time, the Bright Endeavors candle production floor was using two kinds of wax, which was potentially confusing to participants; in response, they color-coded the wax pourers and the

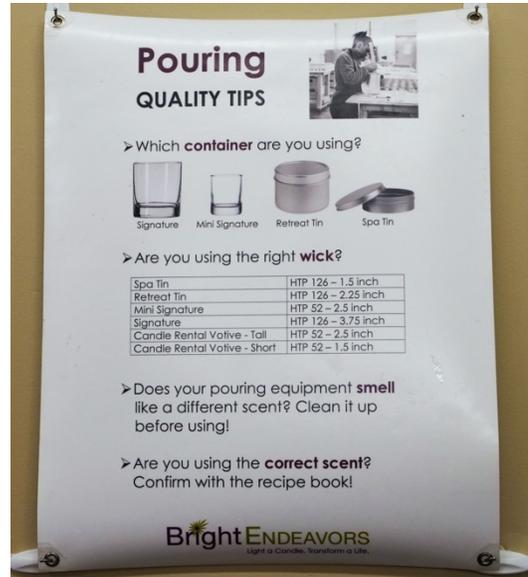
²¹ The SIMPLER framework, as mentioned earlier, continues to be a useful guide for messaging: www.mdrc.org/publication/developing-simpler-solutions

corresponding posters and boxes to ease any stress. New Moms also updates visual cues periodically, so they don't get ignored overtime.

Building on the success of visual cues at Bright Endeavors, staff created and posted lists to remind participants of daily expectations in the career readiness program. Participants seem to appreciate how this clear, visual list of expectations supports them to succeed.

Continual Learning

Based on the insights gained during the creation of this case study, New Moms is exploring these ideas to strengthen Environmental Modifications.



1. Call attention to modifications made by the program or coaches. New Moms may want to call attention to modifications made by the program so that participants better understand all the ways that modifying our environment –or our tasks –can make it more likely that we succeed.
2. Coach participants on making their own modifications. Staff may want to encourage participants to devise their own modifications when thinking through plans to achieve their goals.

ES KNOWLEDGE

In week two of their engagement, all members of a cohort participate in an intimate ES workshop that begins with an activity arranging cards in teams. Then, they are invited to reflect on what skills they used to complete the activity. This creates a strong “anchor” for the rest of the workshop, allowing all the participants to connect personally and immediately with a range of ES skills.²² Next, the facilitator describes ES skills in relatively plain language (see definitions in **Appendix A**), and how these skills are used every day. Participants then watch a video related to ES research and talk about how early experiences can influence these skills.²³ Each woman privately completes the ES profile and reflects on how accurately they feel the profile describes them. Then, they split into groups and create posters using magazine images that represent the skills in their profile.

Each participant’s ES profile with “strengths and struggles” is posted on the wall of the Bright Endeavors candle-making factory. Each profile shows one lit candle (a strength) and one

²² For more on the value of “anchors” in a learning experience, check out “The 4 As of Learning” www.globallearningpartners.com.

²³ A number of video resources on Executive Skills/ Adult Capabilities are available at www.EFWorksLibrary.org.

warming pot (a candle-making metaphor that represents skills requiring greater attention). Personal profiles are used in several ways, including to match each participant to a role in the factory where she will succeed.

Staff also try to pair participants with complementary skills. For example, women who are well-suited to tolerate stress pair well with those who have emotional control challenges.



Staff and participants comment on how helpful it is for participants to see the ES profiles of their co-workers. For example, a participant Team Lead reported to a supervisor that one of the participants is “lazy.” The supervisor invited the Team Lead over to the wall of personal ES posters and pointed out that the worker’s “warming pot” is sustained attention. She then asked a few key questions to open dialogue: *How does this help you see her “laziness” differently? What might you do, as a Team Lead, to help her with sustained attention?*

Staff agree that having knowledge of participants’ ES profiles is extremely useful because it helps them get to know each woman better from the start and provide more individualized attention. Staff take great care in emphasizing how we are all better at some skills than others. Staff also name their own strengths and struggles whenever relevant to a conversation to create a “level ground” relationship.

The daily pre-shift and post-shift routines allow both staff and participants to reflect. Participants begin each day by naming what skill they might “bring to the floor that day” and end by assessing how well they did in the workplace that day. While working, participants support each other. For example, if one team finishes early, they’ll work with another team to ensure all finish on time. At the very end of the day, the floor is open for “shout outs” – words of praise or thanks from participants or staff. This closing ritual is extremely uplifting, not only because it calls attention to what went well that day, but also to what people struggled with - and worked through - together.

Continual Learning

Based on the insights gained during the creation of this case study, New Moms' is exploring these ideas to strengthen **ES Knowledge**.

1. Allow time for participants to accurately assess their skills. Waiting a few weeks into the program may allow participants to generate greater self-awareness about their workplace strengths and struggles.
2. Support and mitigate, rather than aim to eliminate, weaker skills. New Moms is exploring more ways to convey the nuance between getting rid of a weakness and mitigating it through strategies and supports.
3. Reinforce Executive Skills profiles over time. Both participants and staff may benefit from returning to and reviewing their ES profiles at key points over the multi-week program so that they can reflect on how well they are tapping their strengths and supporting their struggles.
4. Increase the visibility of staff's ES profiles. Staff may want to refer more regularly to the full range of their own strengths and struggles and how they manifest at work – and share with participants the strategies staff use to mitigate their struggles, so that participants can see the examples in action.
5. Make ES skills “stickier.” Participants may remember the twelve ES skills more over time if they are described in ways that make sense with the average literacy level of participants (i.e. getting started in lieu of “task initiation”) while still staying faithful to the research. Linking the skills more clearly to New Moms' TOP values (teamwork, ownership, professionalism) may also help women to remember the skills.
6. Use a focus on ES skills to strengthen “classroom-based” work. New Moms is experimenting with more ways to keep ES knowledge alive during the career readiness workshops (e.g., post participants' ES profiles on the workshop walls, much like they are posted at Bright Endeavors' factory).

COACHING

New Moms' staff have long embraced a coaching mindset with participants. They value honesty, integrity, authenticity, and mutual accountability. They bring a curious, rather than punitive, spirit to each encounter. For example, instead of saying “You're late!” they'll ask, “What's going on?” This curiosity can help staff identify modifications and supports to benefit participants, while still holding participants accountable.

The use of an ES approach has enhanced coaching. For example, if staff observe a heated conflict, they will typically separate the two women so they can calm down and keep their “warming pot” skills from taking over. They may talk with each of the participants about emotional control and may offer some pointers about stress tolerance. Talking about the skills – and people's struggles with them – seems to de-personalize and de-escalate the situation.

“The coaching mindset is infused into our program – even from the beginning. For example, if they come in not in dress code, we talk to them about it – and support them to plan differently to get it right next time.” – Mary Blew, *Supportive Employment Specialist*

“Coaching can be formal – but it’s also informal. Every interaction, every conversation – no matter how big or small – is an opportunity to connect and to model behavior with the moms. I tell them ‘let’s learn from watching each other.’” – Natisha Shockley, *formerly Training and Coaching Specialist*

“Participants start to show themselves in the 7th week – that’s when they get comfortable and let their guard down – that is when the coaching can really go deep. They like being held accountable - because it shows you care!” – Cathy Robinson-Yates, *Production and Training Specialist*

The coaching mindset at New Moms also extends to groups. For example, when there’s bullying or negative behavior among members of a cohort, staff might sit with the group to talk about ES skills related to “how we react to things.” Staff may give concrete examples of how they have had to watch their own struggles in this regard, opening a reflection that the participants seem to take to heart.



The ES approach has changed the language staff use when coaching participants. Staff perceive an improvement in how they coach by giving participants the language of strengths and struggles and reinforcing this often.

Coaching is built into the daily routine at the Bright Endeavors. Each morning, a staff member coaches one or two participants as they prepare a 10-minute workshop about one of the TOP values (teamwork, ownership, and professionalism). These workshops build participants’ skills to prepare, speak in public, and think creatively. And the pre- and post-shift routine of discussing their use of executive skills, described earlier, create meaningful opportunities for reflection and coaching.

Participants and staff engage in performance evaluations twice during their time at Bright Endeavors. Coaches provide women with feedback on their strengths and on how they are approaching their struggles. The coaches’ non-judgmental, honest, and caring approach readies each participant for the workplace.

Continual Learning

Based on the insights gained during the creation of this case study, New Moms' is exploring these ideas to strengthen **Coaching**.

1. Describe coaching more explicitly. The new Family-Centered Coaching (FCC) frame and glossary may help staff convey a more consistent definition to participants of what coaching is, why New Moms uses coaching, and what it isn't.
2. Guide participants to find coaches beyond the program. New Moms encourages participants to build social capital by looking for supportive coaches in their worlds outside of New Moms (i.e. *Who asks you useful questions and helps you reflect honestly on your own actions? Who encourages and affirms you?*)
3. Craft a group coaching "exit" workshop. Through an interactive, graduation workshop participants could move from "experiencing" the ES approach to being aware of the framework and using it to support their success moving forward.

GOAL TRACKING

Personal Goal Tracking

Before turning to an ES approach, New Moms focused on long-term goals – such as what did each participant want to accomplish by the end of the program. They saw how the program's short time frame made it difficult for participants to accomplish the goals they'd set, such as earning a GED. New Moms wanted a new approach to goal tracking that would make more sense for participants. New Moms began to focus on daily goals, using the morning and end-of-day check-ins on the production floor. This goal setting proved to be an important part of the daily ritual.

While staff saw value in setting daily goals, they also wanted to link short-term goals to the longer-term goals participants want for themselves and their children.

New Moms drew on behavioral economics to design a new form for capturing meaningful personal, short-term goals. Now, in her quarterly plan, a participant might set a goal to get a certain type of job, get medical insurance, or earn her GED. Each Monday, participants set short-term goals for the week in response to the question: *What is one small step I could take this week that helps me get to my bigger, quarterly goal?* Participants are encouraged to review their goals daily and then weekly as a group with a coach. The form helps coaches track goals and collect data to see possible trends.

"Specific, very short-term goals serve as a vehicle for people to practice all the skills that go into goal setting. Shortened time horizons make sense for people in settings where resources are limited and people need to focus on their immediate needs. When they are successful, it builds their confidence to take on other types of goals." – Dr. Dick Guare

“Some moms are not into doing the goal process every week. We need to periodically reinforce why we track goals – and send the message that you don’t fail because you didn’t do everything you said you were going to do. We continue to work with women on ‘right sizing’ their goals: *‘Is this the right goal for me, right now?’* It’s a muscle that needs to get exercised – it’s about getting into a pattern.” – Gabrielle Caverl-McNeal, *Director of Workforce Development*

Collective Goal Tracking

Candle making lends itself well to tracking goals because progress is visible and easy to track in the short term. It also lends well to learning about how to set and track collective goals, such as the number of candles a team makes in a day.

Soon after adopting an ES approach, New Moms asked participants: *How many candles do you think you can produce today?* In theory, this was an effective approach because it helped participants set achievable goals for themselves. But sometimes participants set goals that, collectively, would not hit the production needs for the day – or were too ambitious. New Moms realized providing more guidance on production goals was needed.

Now, participants are told the required production for the day and how that collective goal translates into team goals. At the close of each day, they ask participants to discuss whether they met their team goal. Staff sometimes discuss with participants how attention to quality can affect the achievement of quantifiable goals. For example, a set of candles that are poured badly slows down finishing; while the pouring team may easily hit their goal, they also want to keep in mind the goals of their finishing team. Participants are encouraged to learn slowly and speed up as they get better – even if it means being “under goal” at first.

In addition to daily team goals for candle-making, the entire production floor shares a “scrap goal” for the amount of waste generated in the month. The goal is to always get less scrap than they did that month the previous year. A large chalkboard in the production room shows the goal and tracks their progress. If they meet their goal, they have a pizza party.



Continual Learning

Based on the insights gained during the creation of this case study, New Moms is exploring these ideas to strengthen **Goal Tracking**.

1. Experiment. New Moms is experimenting with new ways for participants to 1) focus on meaningful daily goals; and 2) link these daily goals to longer-term milestones.
2. Create variety. Staff are experimenting with ways to decrease the monotony of the goal tracking process and increase participants' engagement and enthusiasm when setting and reviewing goals.
3. Revisit goals daily. Staff are carving out more time for participants to check in (with staff or each other) about their weekly goals –to celebrate progress and to make adjustments to their goals over the course of the week.
4. Integrate more insights from research. Staff may benefit from more depth and training on the research about goal achievement such as mental contrasting and implementation intentions.
5. Ensure goal achievement in order to build confidence. Participants who have been led to feel poorly about themselves in the past, or who did not achieve a previous goal, may be reluctant to set new goals. Partnering with participants to set goals that are within reach will grow their confidence in their ability to set and achieve more complex goals over time.

INCENTIVES

Incentives are a type of environmental modification – structural supports for participants that reduce obstacles to goal progression and celebrate goal achievement. Brain and behavioral science underscores the need for programs (and employers) to be specific about what they want to incentivize – and to communicate that clearly to participants (and employees). To this end, New Moms “unpacked” the three key values – teamwork, ownership, professionalism – into concrete observable actions promoted in the workplace. Positive feedback from staff and co-workers about these values seems to be a major incentive.



One of the most effective incentives seems to be earning the role of a team lead. This is a prestigious position, made visible by a special red apron. Earning this elevated position is an incentive to minimize broken commitments and to demonstrate the key values. The team lead position is attractive for a variety of reasons.

- The Bright Endeavors entryway displays photos and names of team leads for each department.
- Leads serve as a coach and supervisor to the teams on the production floor. They are the intermediary between New Mom staff and other participants.
- Although they don't get a formal pay raise, team leads may get paid for extra hours or do off-site sales with the sales team.
- Leads are proud to put this added experience and recognition on their resume – and feel that it opens doors for them in their next job.

In addition to personal, specific, and daily affirmation, New Moms participants are incentivized by a structured “Learn and Earn” program. Originally, they received points for demonstrating agreed-upon tasks (such as completing an application, checking a credit score, or meeting with a coach). They could use these points to buy gifts at the end of the week. More recently, New Moms has been experimenting with an approach through which participants earn cash. Each mom starts the program with no funds. Each time they complete tasks in a range of categories including career readiness, financial capabilities, and goal setting, they accrue money, up to \$275 in the form of a gift card. Unlike many other programs, New Moms’ cash incentives extend beyond their time in the program. Participants can receive cash bonuses for reaching benchmarks for job retention (30 days, 90 days, 6 months) and celebrating one year on the job.

“Laquisha and I are new Team Leads. We’re getting extra work and pay. Next week, we’ll help sell candles after-hours at an event. We’ll meet our goals – sell \$500 worth of candles on Friday, and \$800 in candles on the weekend. I know we will.” – *A workforce development participant*

Continual Learning

Based on the insights gained during the creation of this case study, New Moms’ is exploring these ideas to strengthen **Incentives**.

1. Encourage personal rewards. Staff may pay greater attention to coaching participants on affirmations and rewards they can provide for themselves. (i.e. *What do I want to give myself to help nudge me toward the goals I have for myself?*)
2. Link incentives to obstacles. New Moms may want to look more closely at common obstacles participants face and common goals they share and identify how incentives could help them tackle or move around those obstacles.
3. Encourage Direct Deposit. New Moms is actively exploring a move from gift cards to cash incentives.

WHAT EFFECT HAS THIS APPROACH HAD ON PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF?

THE ES APPROACH DEEPENS SELF-AWARENESS

New Moms is about a woman's well-being, not just her performance in the workplace. Staff often help participants bridge what they are learning in the workplace with what they are doing outside. For example, during a morning presentation by participants about teamwork before starting on the production floor, staff asked the presenters: *How does teamwork play out in your personal life?* The ES approach seems to help bolster self-awareness and self-esteem because it helps participants be honest about themselves. They feel it builds character and self-confidence that extends far beyond the workplace.

Participants interviewed for this report powerfully described the effectiveness of the New Moms workforce development experience and highlighted themes that were voiced repeatedly. Their comments include these:

- “New Moms cares about us; we are not a job or a project for the staff. They really care about us as people!”
- “New Moms gets us ready for work – but also grows us as women.”
- “I know myself so much better. I see how my skills are strengths or struggles for me outside of work and how this helps me in all sorts of ways.”
- “It’s always good to get someone else’s opinion and stop to think about what you’re doing. This whole program builds our metacognition.”

– Workforce development participants

THE ES APPROACH SUPPORTS YOUNG PARENTS

ES knowledge supports participants as parents. The ES-informed parenting workshop underscores that ES strengths and struggles show up in behaviors of both parent and child:

- A temper tantrum is a manifestation of poor emotional control.
- A threat like “you’re grounded for life” is an example of poor response inhibition.
- A parent patiently listening to their child tell a story is an example of sustained attention, and the child’s storytelling is an example of organizational skills.

Participants often use the parent support group to not only exchange experiences as young mothers but also



to reflect on their own childhoods. For example, the session on using a timeout often expands to a rich conversation about how they were disciplined as children, and how this informs their own approach to discipline.

THE ES APPROACH STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS

New Moms' cohort approach creates connections and bonds that often endure beyond the program. The ES approach seems to fortify these bonds by helping participants see each other's strengths and struggles more clearly and by creating a sense of mutual support. Staff are experimenting with ways to extend connections across cohorts.

THE ES APPROACH EXPANDS STAFF INSIGHTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

New Moms staff members read and discuss articles about ES and participate in ES training workshops. This ongoing training, and the informal conversations that happen around it, have created common language around ES throughout New Moms – even in parts of the agency that aren't yet “formally” using an ES approach.

Staff appreciate the insights they glean about both colleagues and themselves through this process, and can find humor in what otherwise might be a frustrating clash of styles in the workplace. Some staff say this ability to “laugh at myself” and be open about others' differences has helped with morale.

The ES framework also seems to help staff find equal ground with participants, since everyone must discuss their strengths and challenges. Staff see the approach as relevant for everybody and helps them connect more deeply with participants.



“I know my own strengths/ struggles – when I’m stressed, I see that my struggles show up more. I can tell I’m heading down a path and I do things to correct it. I also understand and appreciate my team’s strengths/ struggles – and keep these in mind as we work together.” – Melanie Garrett, *Chief Program Officer*

THE ES APPROACH HOLDS PROMISE FOR LONG-TERM QUANTITATIVE CHANGES

In addition to extensive qualitative and short-term data about the ES approach, New Moms is exploring longer-term quantitative indicators. For example, they are starting to see impacts in program retention, participants’ self-efficacy, better literacy and numeracy metrics, and heightened production at Bright Endeavors. And early data suggest participants using this approach are more likely to retain employment.

Quantifying such effects is challenging because, by design, it is integrated seamlessly into a program alongside other proven approaches and experimental innovations. Staff has observed some improvements that appear to be connected to the sustained use of the ES approach. For example, at Bright Endeavors, retention and recruitment have improved as has the rate of participants failing to attend a work shift. And participants are making fewer mistakes in the candle factory, as reflected in a decline in scrap counts.

Some examples follow of how New Moms is looking for positive connections between the ES approach and desired outcomes.

- Better job matching and heightened retention. The ES approach has the potential to improve workplace fit between employee and employer. New Moms is testing the hypothesis that, by connecting women with jobs that are a good fit for them, participants will experience higher employment retention and employers will benefit, as well
- A reduction in parenting stress. The ES approach is designed to reduce parental stress. Participants take a Parental Stress Scale assessment before and after the ES-informed parenting workshop series, and staff compare the results to observe changes over time. The workforce development team recognizes that a reduction in parental stress may not show up given the short time frame of the parenting workshops. As the approach expands to other programs in the organization, New Moms expects to see a greater measurable impact on decreased parental stress.

New Moms has wrestled with some aspects of data collection. It has been difficult, for example, to collect accurate, ongoing data about participants’ goal progression due to the need to track it first on paper and then in a data system. The organization is looking into interactive participant-coach goal tracking software.

Part Three | How the Approach has Evolved and Expanded throughout New Moms

HOW IS THE APPROACH REFLECTED IN THE MINDSET OF THE AGENCY?

The New Moms workforce development team has developed an executive skills mindset that influences how they approach both policy and program decisions. This mindset will help ensure the approach will live on when staffing changes inevitably happen. The executive skills (ES) mindset is perhaps best illustrated by the kinds of questions that staff ask themselves regularly about each key component of the ES approach.

KEY QUESTIONS TO SUSTAIN AN EXECUTIVE SKILLS MINDSET

Environmental Modifications

(Individual): *What will support each Mom to succeed?* (e.g., text reminder)

(Group): *What can we put in place to build all participants' engagement and success?* (e.g., visual aids on production floor)

(Barrier Removal): *What support can we provide for women to overcome the hurdles they face outside the program?* (e.g., bus cards or gas cards)

Executive Skill Knowledge

How can we, as staff, be mindful of our own ES strengths and struggles as we interact with each other and with participants?

What strategies can we model (both individually and collectively) so that participants learn from what we are doing?

Coaching

How can awareness of individuals' strengths and struggles be helpful in this situation?

How can women tap their strengths and build practical strategies?

SMART Goal Tracking

How can attention to individual, group, and business goals (i.e. daily, weekly, and monthly) keep everyone on track?

Incentives

What are the best ways to reward participants for goal achievement and encourage their goal progression?

HOW IS THE APPROACH SPREADING THROUGH THE AGENCY?

The organizational chart below provides a high-level view of New Moms’ structure as of the Fall of 2019. As illustrated by the chart, the approach spread across the agency in phases. In Phase I, the approach was established within Workforce Development and Bright Endeavors (the candle-making factory) where staff championed the approach and built out what has been described in detail in this case study. In Phase II, the approach spread to different program areas (i.e. Family Support, and Housing) as well as to some operational areas (i.e. Development and Communications). In Phase III, staff in other parts of the agency (i.e. Finance, Business) became familiar with the approach and explored potential applications in their work.



EARLY STEPS TO SPREAD THE APPROACH

New Moms’ leadership established the following routines to spread the approach throughout the agency. Each of these continue today.

- All staff are required to read *Poverty, Interrupted*²⁴ and discuss it in staff orientation.
- All staff participate in a two-hour ES training workshop, completing and reflecting on their own ES profiles and SMART goals.
- Staff explore the approach during retreats and other all-staff events.
- The New Moms Board of Directors participate in presentations and discussions about the ES approach.

²⁴ Ideas 42 white paper: “Poverty, Interrupted.” www.ideas42.org/blog/project/poverty-interrupted

New Moms also intentionally integrated executive skills and behavioral science into their core curricula. For example, they established the following cross-program work groups.

A Parent Support Working Group built out an ES-informed parent support curriculum and adapted it to fit within Housing and Family Support programs. Realizing the need for consistent curricula and fidelity to the materials as the organization grew, New Moms added a Parent Education Manager role across Housing & Family Support programs.

A Financial Capability Working Group adapted the Financial Capability workshop to fit within the New Moms context and enhanced it with insights from behavioral science. The curriculum continues to evolve through implementation with input from participants.

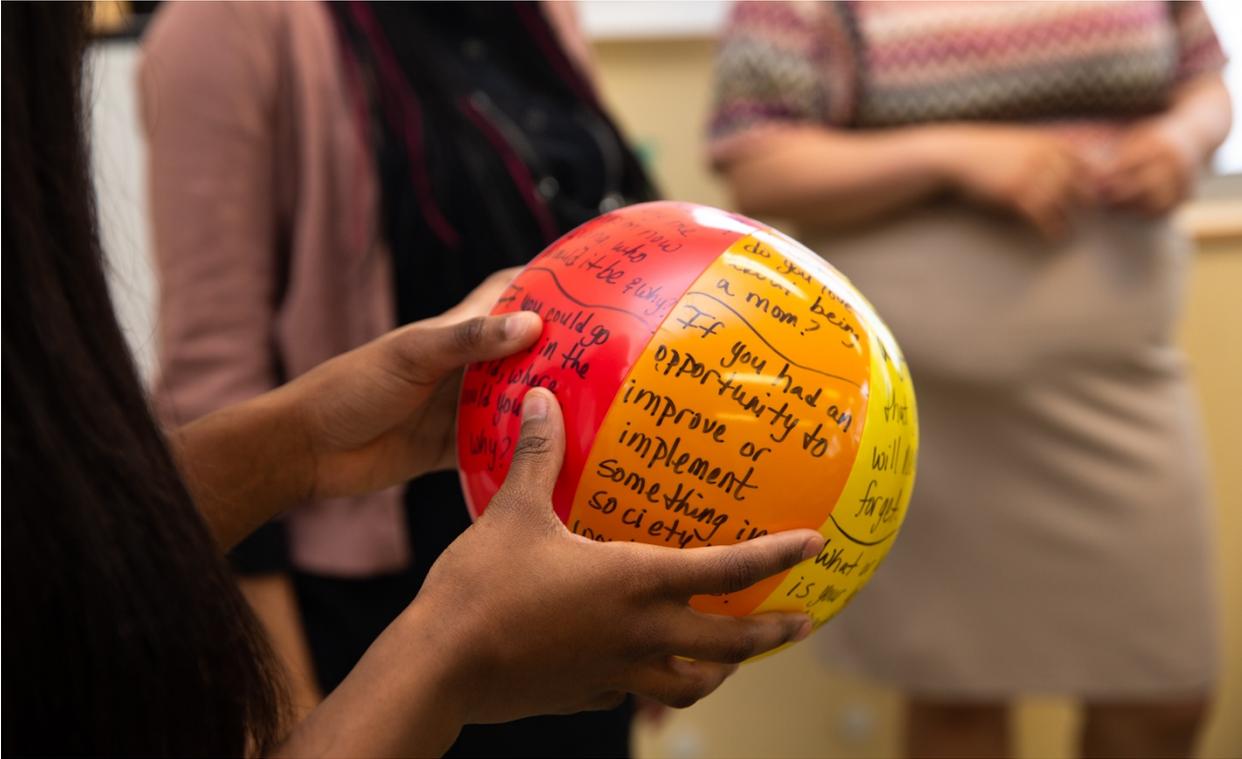
One of the most significant moves that New Moms took to spread the approach through the agency was to establish a cross-functional **ES steering committee**, including program and administrative staff members from across the organization. The ES steering committee played a critical role in the adaptive change process that is now well underway across New Moms. They made sure that all staff would have the training, reflective supervision, and a personal understanding of the ES approach. In other words, they made sure that all staff knew their own strengths/ struggles to understand themselves and all participants as whole people with ES commonalities.

“Staff are still getting exposed to the ES approach and reflecting on who they are. When I first was exposed to it, as an urban planner, I thought this was kind of squishy. But, now I talk to staff about my ES profile – and ask them questions to dig into their own. We recognize we all have strengths and weaknesses and ask ‘How can we support each other?’” – Stacey Flint, *Director of Housing*

EARLY DISCOVERIES AS THE APPROACH SPREAD

The steering committee discovered that, while the approach resonated with staff in Workforce Development, and felt like a “natural fit” there, this was not the case for all the program areas, nor for the operations areas. In fact, there was some skepticism and resistance to integrating the approach into their day-to-day work. For example, human resources staff were unsure about their capacity to adapt policies, procedures and hiring tools to align with the approach. And, family support staff questioned whether the approach would be successful without the intensity of daily exposure, over multiple weeks, as experienced in Workforce Development and Bright Endeavors. Some staff felt overwhelmed by the number of service delivery methods to choose from – and wondered how they fit together? They grappled with when and how to use one method over another during coaching sessions.

The ES steering committee needed to respond to this broader organizational ambivalence and confusion about the ES approach. With staff input, the steering committee decided to take a step back and survey the full organization’s readiness for the adaptive change of an ES-informed coaching approach. The steering committee also decided to clarify the link between each of the service delivery methods so they would be seen as part of a whole framework, and not separate and disconnected from each other. The ES steering committee also refined the messaging and language they were using to describe the ES approach in order to better connect with New Moms Housing & Family Support program goals. All of this work led New Moms to position and view the ES approach as a fundamental service delivery method fully integrated into one broader, central, organizing service framework agency-wide.

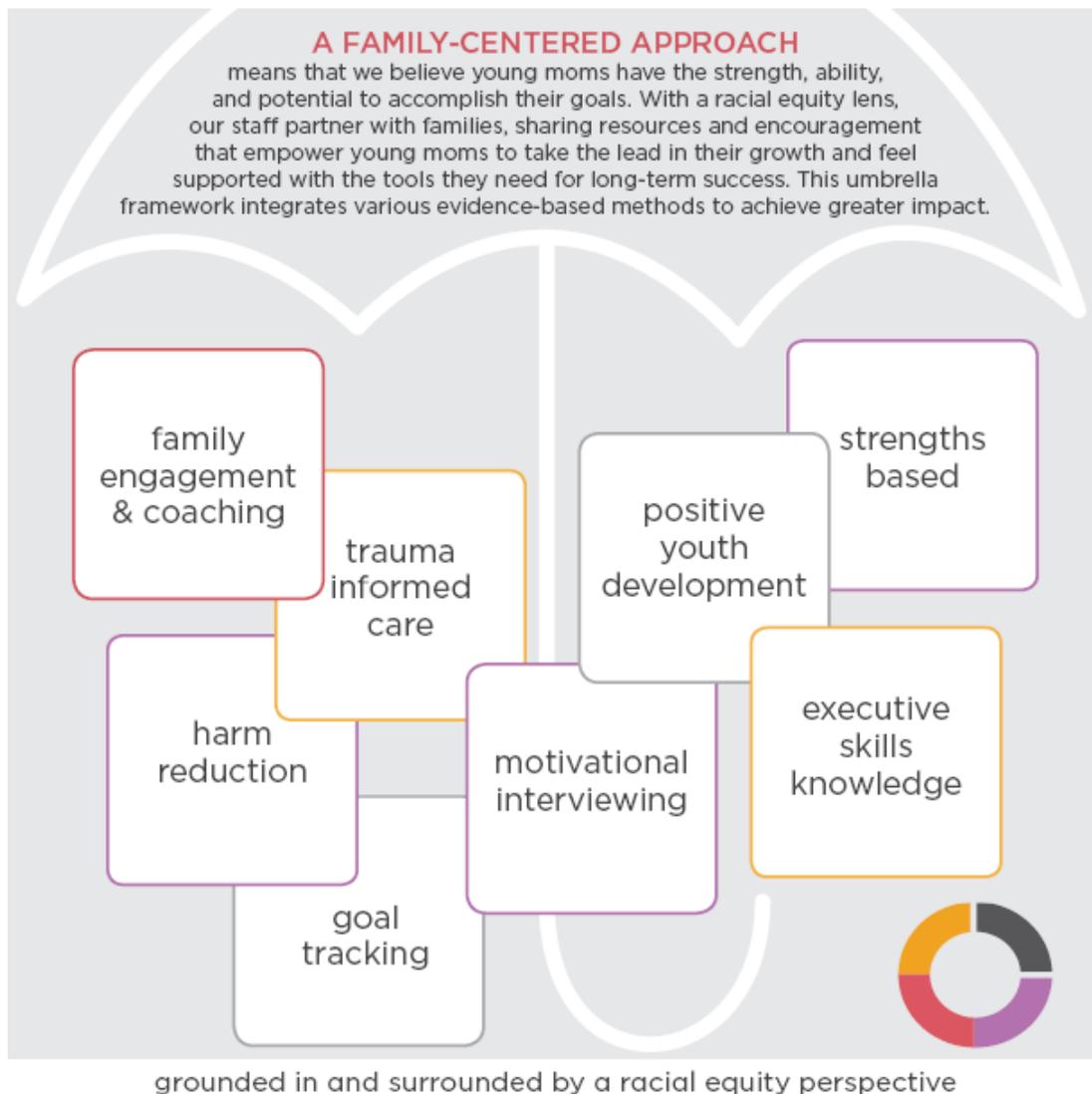


“Executive skills is a tool we have found to be extremely helpful for our participants, and the language and structure it provides. It allows for clearer navigation across many areas such as parenting, relationships, and conflict resolution. The common language of ES is a building block for having self-worth because knowing yourself is the first step in valuing yourself. ES gives moms some social feedback and cognitive awareness. It resonates with them: ‘Yes, I am good at that!’” – Katie Wise, *Home Visiting Manager of Family Support, Chicago*

HOW HAS NEW MOMS' EXPANDED THEIR FRAMEWORK?

New Moms now embraces a broader participant service framework called Family-Centered Coaching (FCC)²⁵ which incorporates an ES approach along with adjacent and important strategies already in use in the organization.

The graphic below illustrates how New Moms is using FCC as a unifying framework. Most of the ES approach elements described in this case study are incorporated under the umbrella. Environmental modifications are an important backdrop to the graphic, woven into the fabric of the program.



²⁵ www.familycenteredcoaching.org

Clear and concise, the FCC umbrella framework was well-received by New Moms program and operations staff. Staff feel that the FCC framework affirms much of what they are already doing, provides a solid structure that encompasses the integrated array of strategies already in use, and explicitly calls attention to the racial equity lens of the work. Within this framework, ES is a core service delivery pillar, alongside other approaches that all align with the spirit of FCC.

Expanding to an FCC umbrella framework has allowed New Moms to fortify its deep commitment to **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**. The DE&I Committee endorsed the FCC framework, and organizational leaders completed a self-assessment of where the organization sees itself in terms of diversity and equity and identified priorities for improvement.

Subsequently, the ES steering committee changed its name to the Family-Centered Coaching²⁶ (FCC) Steering Committee, which to date has:

- Crafted a **statement of purpose** for the FCC framework (which incorporates ES approach messaging);
- Updated their organizational “**brand compass**” to reflect the values and language inherent in family-centered coaching and the strengths-based lens of the ES approach. The compass received several rounds of input from all staff so that it feels cohesive and resonant to staff in different roles;
- Developed a **glossary** of terms for the FCC framework to bring alignment and clarity to the meaning of the organizations’ core service delivery strategies and concepts;
- Designed and facilitated a training at the **all-staff retreat** about the FCC framework and mindset, with more staff conversations planned;
- Committed to including an FCC topic in all staff quarterly meetings moving forward;
- Conducted two **self-assessments**²⁷ about FCC implementation, which they will use as a monitoring tool overtime;
- Prioritized **areas to celebrate** as the organization expands and deepens this approach.

WHAT’S ON THE HORIZON?

New Moms’ staff see the benefit of integrating the ES approach and broader FCC framework into the organization, and so are willing to work transparently on the adaptive challenges that such transition brings. Frontline, middle management, and executive leadership staff are working on these challenges together through the FCC Steering Committee, asking: *How can we implement and deliver ES in ways that are tailored to each program’s and department’s unique needs, while maintaining fidelity to the core approach?*

²⁶ New Moms’ visit to the Aspen Institute’s Ascend conference helped them see the value of executive skills within a broader, two-generation, family-centered coaching approach. www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/ascend

²⁷ New Moms used materials publicly available through Prosperity Agenda: theprosperityagenda.org/familycentered-coaching.

Integrating the FCC Approach into Operations

New Moms' development and communications department is building FCC messaging and language into their work in various ways. For example, they are devoting a section of their all-staff internal weekly newsletter to FCC topics. They are incorporating the spirit of the FCC statement of purpose, glossary, and updated brand compass on grant applications and funder reports. New Moms updated their website to reflect the FCC framework, and developed a service model brochure outlining the FCC umbrella framework and various strategies and systems that support it.²⁸ They are beginning a process to incorporate FCC-inspired language and messaging into ongoing communications with various stakeholders as well, especially thinking about ways to further incorporate participant input and quotes to create messages and visuals that convey successes to participants.

The FCC Steering Committee also convened an Ad-Hoc Human Resources Committee to incorporate FCC, racial equity, and growth mindset concepts into HR activities. The HR Committee is working to incorporate the FCC framework into hiring, onboarding, and training, and performance evaluations in the following ways:

- Hiring: include a statement about upholding the FCC framework into all job postings and job descriptions, and standardizing certain interview questions agency-wide, including questions concerning equity, growth mindset, and the coaching spirit.
- Onboarding/training: clarifying the required trainings for the FCC framework and service delivery strategies for all staff and specific to program staff (and developing a new DE&I and FCC training), aligning agency-wide onboarding checklists
- Performance evaluation: Include new questions on performance evaluations asking staff to reflect on how they are upholding DE&I values and the FCC framework.

Integrating the FCC Approach Into Programs

New Moms has two main programs in addition to its Workforce Development/Bright Endeavors program: Housing and Family Support. Program Supervisors and Directors across all three programs gather monthly to discuss service delivery improvements. Going forward, every other month supervisors will dedicate their meeting to discuss ways to better incorporate the ES approach and broader FCC framework into ongoing coach training and participant services.

New Moms' **Housing** program offers young mothers stable housing for up to two years. Staff conduct one-on-one home visits with residents who want to engage with supportive services. During these coaching sessions, each woman explores her hopes and dreams – and develops personal goals – while building confidence and skills to support her family. Over half of the residents in the housing program dually enroll in the workforce development program. This allows program staff to work as a team and reinforce each other's coaching with a participant.

²⁸ New Moms' Service Delivery Model: newmoms.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Moms-Model_Electronic.pdf

Through **Family Support**, staff visit young mothers in their home on a regular basis (until the child is 5 years old). The program also offers doula services for pregnant women through childbirth and immediately after. In addition to one-on-one coaching, staff also facilitate group parenting sessions where Moms who live in the community gather to connect and learn together.

The Housing and Family Support teams have begun to introduce women to executive skills in groups. They are piloting an adapted version of workforce development's Parent Support Group,²⁹ during which participants practice new skills with their child in the same room. The teams have also convened a smaller Focus Group of Housing and Family Support coaches to design ways to adapt the ES approach to Home Visits. For example, they may 1) enhance the current home visiting program by inviting the mom to complete her ES profile and sharing the coaches' own ES strengths and struggles; 2) host celebrations with moms and kids to make positive social connections with each other; 3) apply modifications to improve the variability of the home visiting environment itself – such as bringing a special “play mat” to all Home Visits; and 4) explore intrinsic as well as extrinsic incentives with moms engaged in various services. The Focus Group will design Home Visiting-specific ES approach strategies that will be piloted and refined in advance of full implementation in 2020.

“We are a unique agency in that we combine family support, housing, and job training. We are all embracing the FCC approach – it is a common thread. But, how it looks in each corner of the agency will – and should – look different. The key will be to reinforce it on a regular basis across the agency, through staff meetings and reflective supervision. Like anything else, to make it stick, we'll need to keep our attention on it – and talk through how to practice it in very real ways with moms in different settings.” – Gail Shelton, *Director of Family Support, Oak Park*

²⁹ This ES curriculum is based off the Chicago Parent Program and adjusted by Dr. Dick Guare.

Closing: A Reflection for the Field

The integration of an ES approach into New Moms has been a significant adaptive change process. It illustrates that organizational change happens slowly – and cannot be rushed. It underscores the importance of listening to staff and to participants while rolling out an approach. And, it highlights the need for an iterative creative process – testing, tweaking, and re-testing until landing on something that works for everyone.

Our case study team unearthed the five key components of New Moms’ approach. This closing section shares insights into each of these five areas.

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN ES APPROACH	KEY INSIGHTS FOR THE FIELD
Environmental Modifications	Participants are more successful when we work with them to remove barriers to success. This may mean adjusting tasks, materials, processes, policies, or physical space to clear a path for goal attainment. Some environmental modifications are intuitive when one looks at the participant pathway from a participant’s perspective. Many modifications can be relatively easy, fast, and cheap to implement. Programs that make thoughtful environmental modifications can greatly support participant success.
Executive Skills Knowledge	Everyone should know and openly discuss their ES strengths and struggles – without judgment or shame. The ES profiles are linked to patterns of behavior that show up in the workplace and beyond. By looking “under the hood” of our behaviors – and others’ behaviors – we are in a better position to offer compassion and support.
Coaching	Coaching is more a mindset than a process. In a coaching mindset, staff see participants as decision-makers in their own lives and find ways to put the participant in control. The staff-participant relationship is a partnership in which staff provide participants with feedback that is honest and affirming.

<p>Goal Tracking</p>	<p>Goal tracking begins by creating a space for participants to share their long-term hopes and dreams. Goal tracking also must link these aspirations to short-term goals that are specific and personal. Staff help participants focus on goals that are a good fit with their ES strengths, motivations, and context. Doing so helps build “muscle,” confidence, and motivation over time and, through a series of successes, create a ladder to larger goals.</p>
<p>Incentives</p>	<p>Extrinsic motivation is useful when self-motivation is hard to muster, or barriers seem too hard. Together, staff and participants explore obstacles that might derail goal progression – and find ways to “nudge” behaviors in support of the participant’s goal. Participants as well as staff celebrate and reward success. Program incentives don’t need to be expensive or complicated; they require experimentation to discover what will truly motivate different participants.</p>

The implementation of an ES approach – like any other innovation – is a continual process of doing, tweaking, and re-tweaking. The New Moms team recognizes this and is committed to continued refinement.

APPENDIX A | Executive Skills Defined ³⁰

HOW WE ORGANIZE AND PLAN THINGS

Organization: Knowing where I put things

The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.

Time Management: Know about how long a task will take and what the deadline is

The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.

Planning/ Prioritization: Deciding what steps to take

The ability to create a road map to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what is important to focus on and what is not.

HOW WE REACT TO THINGS

Response Inhibition: Seeing the consequence before I say or do something

The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it.

Flexibility: Going with the flow, accepting change

The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.

Emotional Control: Keeping my cool when frustrated

The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.

Stress Tolerance: Managing my stress

The ability to work in stressful situations and to cope with uncertainty, change, and performance demands.

Metacognition: Evaluating how I'm doing

The ability to stand back and take a bird's eye view of yourself in a situation, to observe how you problem-solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (for example, asking yourself "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?")

³⁰ These definitions are based on the good work of Dr. Dick Guare.

HOW WE GET THINGS DONE

Task Initiation: Getting started without a delay

The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.

Sustained Attention: Paying attention, even when I don't feel like it

The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.

Goal-Directed Persistence: Sticking with my goal

The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of that goal, and not be put off or distracted by competing interests.

Working Memory: Remembering what I did and what I need to do

The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future.

APPENDIX B | Key Terms

This section defines key terms used in this case study, including definitions from New Moms' new **Family-Centered Coaching (FCC) Glossary** developed for staff.

Social Enterprise	A lower-profit business that has a distinct social mission.
Bright Endeavors	New Moms' social enterprise – a candle company that provides participants with a hands-on, paid transitional job.
TOP Values	TOP stands for teamwork, ownership, and professionalism. These three underlying values are used to inspire and guide the work of staff and participants in workforce development.
Executive Skills (ES) Approach	An evidence-based approach with five core components: participant and staff executive skills knowledge, SMART goal tracking, coaching and curricula, environmental modifications, and incentives. The ES Approach is strengths-based, helps to match goals with ES strengths, and focuses on changing behaviors and actions over time more than changing the skills themselves.
Environmental Modifications	Modifying the physical environment, processes, technology, materials, and tasks to decrease barriers, making it easier to set and attain goals.
Coaching	The mindset and role of everyone at New Moms. Coaching calls out the strengths and capabilities of families and allows them to lead the conversation.
Goal Tracking	The ability to create specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely goals (aka SMART goals) <i>and</i> track the progression towards goals, while providing support for goal achievement.
Incentives	External motivators that helps remove barriers or provides additional support to achieve goals; also a celebration of goal attainment.
Family-Centered Coaching (FCC)	An approach to family engagement and service delivery that believes that families have the expertise and ability to set and achieve goals. It puts the participant in the driver's seat, focuses on the whole family, and takes into account different perspectives by recognizing that each family is unique.

APPENDIX C | About This Case Study

This case study was made possible through funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The team for this collaborative case study included Valerie Uccellani and Meg Logue from Global Learning Partners (GLP), with Melanie Garrett, Gabrielle Caverl-McNeal, and Dana Emanuel from New Moms. Tom Waldron joined the team in the editing phase.

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Please contact Global Learning Partners at info@globallearningpartners.com to ask more about the collaborative, learning-centered process we used to build this case study. Go to www.globallearningpartners.com for practical guidance and resources on how adults learn.