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I. General

What is *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World*? *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* (GA) is a facilitated program to help individuals build their own personal plan to get out of poverty and create sustainability. It is built on the work and ideas of Dr. Ruby Payne on the hidden rules of economic class, and the subsequent applications of those principles in two books by Philip DeVol (*Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities* and *Bridges to Sustainable Communities: A system wide, cradle-to-grave approach to ending poverty in America*).

This program includes ten modules: My Life Now; Theory of Change; Rich/Poor Gap & Research on Causes of Poverty; Hidden Rules of Economic Class; The Importance of Language; Eleven Resources; Self-Assessment of Resources; Community Resources; Building Resources; and Personal & Community Plans. The program shows how to use the “Hidden Rules” to build up financial, emotional, social, and other resources. Understanding the hidden rules of the middle class and wealth, and choosing to use them, can open doors to new relationships, new jobs, and higher resources. The workbook is designed to be used as an investigation tool by people working in groups with a trained facilitator. The participants (called ‘investigators’) explore the impact that poverty has had on them, investigate economic realities, complete a self-assessment of their own resources, make plans to build their own resources, and develop a mental model of community prosperity.

What is the typical time commitment to complete the ten modules in 15-20 sessions? Our first program lasted two months. We met for two sessions per week (Monday and Wednesday) for the first month. For the first three weeks of the second month, we met Mondays only, and met twice in the last week. Each session lasted three hours, for a total of approximately 39-45 hours of class time. In subsequent programs, we met for three hours once a week for 15-20 weeks (with an additional session during the first week, to get to know each other and begin the work). Meeting more frequently than twice a week can be hard emotionally for the participants, not to mention challenging to schedule. Conversely, meeting less frequently than once a week can make it hard to maintain momentum and build relationships.

This document was produced by the Marinette, WI St. Joseph Conference Getting Ahead program. It includes input from the Facilitator Training team, other Councils implementing Getting Ahead and mentoring, and questions from participants in the Getting Ahead Facilitator Training & train-the-trainer workshops).

Systemic Change formation materials: Resources, Getting Ahead, Bridges out of Poverty, as well as presentations on Getting Ahead preparation, Mentoring overview of process and tools can be downloaded at svdpusa.org/systemicchange.

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The first week is paperwork, organization, team building, and introductions. The last week is the graduation celebration and presentation of final mental models, as well as preparation and planning for implementing future plans.

What is the typical number of ‘Investigators’ per course? Essentially, it is a local decision. The GA facilitator manual says the optimum number of investigators is 8-12. In our experience, 6-10 is optimal. Since some will drop out, starting with less than six could result in too few, and more than 10 will limit discussion and make it harder for the group to come together.

Investigators can be identified by graduates of the program, based on a need or thought that this candidate may benefit as well as make a contribution. Investigators can also be recommended and handpicked. Referrals come from agencies and groups that collaborate on services to those in poverty: United Way, domestic violence shelters, housing service providers, community action agencies, county human services, etc.

Have you incorporated Vincentian spirituality into the program? We developed a set of faith-based spiritual reflections and discussions that can be used with each GA lesson. A local group can redesign these to be general public reflections without the context of God or Christianity. The Vincentian Spirituality of caring, compassion, and acceptance of each participant regardless of “where” they are in life, shows a true Vincentian spirit and acceptance of others. As facilitators, we were moved each week with the sharing and knowledge that each investigator brought to the table. It was not about what they could get, rather what they could give.

Is there anything you would do differently if you were starting over? We would create an ongoing program with options for after graduation. From the first program, we realized we need a better understanding of the individual needs and benefits/resources in our community. One of our investigators wrote, “Personally, I believe firmly in budget and credit counseling and use of the SMART goals to use what we have learned in this first course to improve ourselves.”

A critique by Paul Gorski, written in 2005, of Ruby Payne’s first book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, claims that her approach was “classist” and “racist,” and that it did not address systemic issues in our communities: http://www.edchange.org/publications/Savage_Unrealities.pdf. Is there any validity to this criticism?

Ruby Payne’s *Framework* was written for school administrators and teachers, and she freely stated at the time that it was not originally intended to address systemic issues. Nevertheless, her original data on the hidden rules of class and the reality of social norms arising from economic environments have resonated with millions of people.

Her work on economic class has allowed Americans to talk about barriers to change without supporting “classism.” In fact, the author of *Getting Ahead*, Phil DeVol, argues that knowledge of class environments and hidden rules actually helps undo classism. As for racism, Ruby Payne was referring to specific patterns observed in case studies and not generalizing characteristics of all individuals in a group.

Payne co-authored *Bridges Out of Poverty* in 2001 with Philip E. DeVol and Terie Dreussi-Smith as the organization branched out into working toward healthy, sustainable communities. In the subsequent collaborative work between Payne and DeVol in 2010, *Bridges to Sustainable Communities*, they recommend a “triple lens” (individual, institution, community) approach. This approach is a more comprehensive matrix that addresses all the causes of poverty, in which systemic change and advocacy are clearly embraced. People in poverty are engaged to identify barriers they face as they stabilize their lives and build resources, and to take seats at community planning and decision-making tables. Moreover, solid evidence is accumulating regarding the effectiveness of Bridges constructs and the *Getting Ahead in a Just Getting’ by World* program.

This comprehensive approach led the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to Bridges as a framework to assist in bringing about systemic change. SVdP recognizes that a systemic approach is needed to meet our goal of ending poverty--one individual, one family, one community at a time.

Just like the Society, Bridges recommends resisting political party affiliation, but advocating with local, state and federal officials to change laws that are a barrier to escaping poverty. The work of the Society's Voice of the Poor Committee is well aligned with Bridges' constructs for engaging in systemic change at the local, state, and federal levels.

It also important to note that in the field of education, Payne's career-long goal of offering strategies for successfully raising student achievement and overcoming economic class barriers have become a cornerstone of advanced school improvement, used with school districts across the country. Dr. Payne's work stems from more than 30 years of experience in public schools as a high school department head, principal, and central office administrator of staff development. Sequels to her original *Framework* book include *Research-Based Strategies* (2009) and *School Improvement: 9 Systemic Processes to Raise Achievement* (2010), co-authored with Donna Magee, Ed. D. In 2011, two of her publications received distinguished recognition: a Gold Medal for *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty* from Independent Publisher in the education category, and a Distinguished Achievement Award for *Boys in Poverty: A Framework for Understanding Dropout* (Solution Tree Press) from the Association of Educational Publishers in the professional development category.

When Paul Gorski still lived in Minnesota, a community organizer and Bridges consultant reached out to him and informed him about how Bridges was being applied by various sectors and many communities. Unfortunately, he has not updated his critique. If he had, he might have found that his criticisms were largely moot. What is unfortunate is that his criticism has gone unchallenged since 2005.

How has use of this program changed what the Society does in your area? Has it altered the share of time/money between meeting immediate needs vs. systemic change? Our conference continues to assist those in need, at risk of homelessness and/or extreme poverty; as we do, we look for potential candidates for GA. It has created greater awareness of the issues in local organizations and churches who provide lunches. We were able to discuss the needs of our Investigators as well as discussing possible solutions for some of the Investigators. As far as Systemic Change, we covered many things in class in reference to the community as a whole and the needs to improve upon from all levels: organizations and groups, as well as individuals... to create a unified force and goal for change in our community.

One student wrote, "We have just started the course, but I believe it has opened the door for discussions on change and how to reach change. Individuals who take the course are more aware of their need and ability to be self-sufficient and also the community has become aware of how (the Investigators) can help to make positive, permanent changes through education; how to set SMART goals that we will pursue with vigilance... the whole and the possible solutions with big business with numbers and people to back up some of the concerns. Overall, we did a good job of exposing some of the common dilemmas and starting to address them with people from the community."

Change is always hard and requires much effort and input from not only the individual asking for the change, but for the community to be supportive of those changes. The community needs to understand and become familiar with this program so that in the future it can become more supportive and accessible to those contemplating change for their future. Reaching out to those in need is a necessary component.

Is the program available in Spanish? Could you run a program with both Spanish and English speakers? Getting Ahead Investigator workbooks are available in Spanish, but not in the current version which is longer. So, if you wanted both English and Spanish speakers in the same program, you would have to use the older books, or wait until the latest version is available in Spanish. Another obstacle would be group sharing &

interaction. Since much of the learning comes from investigator sharing with each other, this would be challenged if they could not fully communicate with each other.

If you include a mentoring program, your mentors would need to be Spanish speaking, of course.

Is the program available for other target audiences? Different versions of Getting Ahead are available for different groups. *R Rules* targets high school students. *Investigations into Economic Class in America* is a semester-long class for college students. *Getting Ahead While Getting Out* is for ex-offenders. *Getting Ahead in the Workplace* is for a work group environment.

II. Program Planning & Organization

What does it cost to run a Getting Ahead program? The largest cost is the stipend for each investigator. Many programs pay a stipend of \$25 per session via a gift card (e.g. gas card, bus pass, or to a local store). Therefore, if your program had eight investigators for 16 sessions, the stipends would cost \$3200 in total, or \$400 per participant. The Investigator Workbooks cost about \$20 each. Other out-of-pocket expenses include supplies like flip chart paper, pens, supply bags, notebooks, etc. Meals are usually provided as in-kind donations by church/community groups. Child care can be a major cost factor depending on how it is provided. Some groups to avoid liability insurance or if they do not have separate space for child care, pay a provider selected to babysit – in this case, the expense can be equal to the cost of the stipend. Other potential expenses can include the graduation event (food if catered, and nominal gifts); mentor or Bridges training classes; promotional literature. Conservatively, you should plan on a cost per participant between \$500-\$1000. If your program grows big enough to demand more administrative coordination than available from a volunteer, you may need to consider a part time or full time coordinator.

How is this funded? In Marinette, funding came from the conference, local funeral directors, and grants from community partners (Goodwill, United Way, and Caterpillar). A number of our local churches provided a lunch/meal for sessions. Store vouchers for clothing and necessities were also given to the investigators. Waukesha funds its program out of the very successful thrift store profits.

Peoria has obtained grants from the Central Illinois Community Foundation, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Society of St Vincent de Paul annual Friends of the Poor, their annual Friends of the Poor Walk, and community & parish private donations. Conferences can also divert some of their funds from immediate needs assistance to this longer lasting type of aid to our friends in need. Since the number of Getting Ahead investigators is small compared to the number of people helped with immediate basic needs, funding is not on the “critical path” for program success. Recruiting a sufficient number of mentors is a much more significant challenge.

Where can the books for Getting Ahead Facilitators & Investigators be ordered? All Bridges books, including the GA Facilitator and Investigator manuals, *Bridges Out of Poverty*, and *Bridges to Sustainable Communities* should be ordered directly from aha! Process (ahaprocess.com/store/). Bulk pricing is available for larger orders.

Will the Bridges training be available from National, or is it necessary to be trained by aha! Process?
What is the cost of training? Getting Ahead Facilitator Training is available from National, via webinar. Its only cost is purchase of the Investigator & Facilitator books from aha! Process (\$38+S&H).

Bridges Individual Lens training should be provided locally by each Council using the DVD set purchased from National: svdpusa.org/materials/Conference-Council/CategoryID/4/ProductID/120. Trainees should also get a copy of the book, *Bridges Out of Poverty*, purchased from aha! (\$25; \$18 if purchase 10 or more, plus S&H). Pricing information is on the Systemic Change website: svdpusa.org/systemicchange/BridgesOutofPoverty/BridgesMaterials.aspx

The Peoria Council has put on a series of one-day workshops called “Understanding Poverty.” They use a program overview along with the Bridges DVDs along with the handout summary and discussion questions, and a closing presentation put together locally on where they are going next. The total cost to run the workshop was about \$30 per person (\$20 for the book, plus lunch/snacks). It has also been done over two evenings, avoiding the cost (and time) of a meal.

How did Marinette get started? When did you receive the training, where, how long was it, and how much did it cost your conference? When did you do the first investigator training, and was there any additional work do be done in your Conference before you started the training? When Marinette got

started three years ago, the Society did not have the webinar available, so people attended an in-person workshop through aha! Process that cost \$900 (a local partner paid the expense). This training is now offered through the Society, via webinar, for free (only cost is the purchase of a Facilitator & Investigator Workbooks for \$38 + S&H). It is the same training as offered by aha!, but with a Vincentian orientation. Aha! Process gave the Society the rights to use/modify their materials in an agreement with National.

The Society recommends that Getting Ahead be combined with a follow-on mentoring program that provides encouragement and support to participants and graduates, so consider what might be needed to enable that. The mentoring formation and support materials developed last year are stored on the Systemic Change web site in the Conference section. <http://www.svdpusa.org/systemicchange/ConferenceMaterials.aspx>

Those materials include PowerPoint presentations and a variety of support documents, including a Readiness Checklist (which is a good companion piece to the Getting Ahead planning checklist). All these materials are free and can be adopted as is or modified to suit local circumstances. The only formation tools that have price tags to them are the Bridges materials.

Another preparation element will likely include recruiting. Getting Ahead and mentoring are very different from traditional conference charity work, as they require a long-term personal commitment and relationship with a person on the journey out of poverty. This is very different than in & out home visits, which provide a short term, immediate fix to a problem. Since Vincentians are volunteers, they keep coming back because they get something out of the work. Many have not “signed up” for this new service. The Society will continue to do this critical work, and will still need those Vincentians to do it. This new work is going to be targeted at a small subset of those served; some existing Vincentians will feel called to this new work, but recruitment of new volunteers in our parishes and communities will be required.

The Waukesha Council has positioned Bridges Education Sessions as information for Vincentians to become better home visitors, thinking that if they come for this, they just might ‘stay’ to become a trained mentor/facilitator at a subsequent event. The Council also created marketing material to reach other people of good will, as the first step in learning if they wish to be part of this type of program.

How long does it take to get this program off the ground? In Marinette, the community had many organizations already trained in Bridges constructs, so the program was launched within six months. For communities just getting started, it could take up to a year to train Vincentians and community partners in Bridges Out of Poverty constructs, plan the first sessions, train facilitators and mentors, establish the collaboration partnerships, and so on.

Is it better to organize Getting Ahead and mentoring at the Conference or District level?

This really depends on the demographics & geography of the area served (population of the towns, number of conferences, distance between conferences, etc.)

Jeanne Harper has proven that a conference-led approach can work in a small town (Marinette has 11,000, neighboring a town with 9,000) where they are the only conference in town. The community had a nine-year history of knowledge of the *Bridges Out of Poverty* constructs and a lot of community partner participation. And they have the “Jeanne factor”--an incredibly gifted and energetic Vincentian leader who has been the catalyst and glue. Because of Jeanne’s particular talents, her tight relationship with other community leaders (Goodwill, United Way, other agencies and community churches), they were able to go from a decision to pursue Getting Ahead to start of their first program in three months.

When they started four years ago, they had no formal mentoring program (they simply used conference home visitors to maintain ongoing relationships with the GA graduates), so that also shortened the lead time to start. Not all conferences have the right members or capacity to do that (while maintaining current immediate need

home visits). Now that they have moved to multiple GA programs/year, they have some paid staff doing coordination work, and have applied for a CCHD grant to enable them to grow it further (which will move it to a District-level program, as they want to extend to other towns in the county/district). Jeanne has proven that, under the right circumstances (small town, single conference, right leadership, community collaboration), conference led is possible; however this model will not likely be the best in every situation.

Waukesha is an example of a District-led program in a bigger community (300,000) with over 20 conferences, interacting with social service community agencies. It did not make sense to organize the program at the conference level, but they were starting from scratch in terms of community knowledge of Bridges. It took them 9-12 months to get ready before their first GA class started, and conducted multiple community education sessions using the Bridges DVDs. An outline of the mentoring program and how community partners can get involved was used to educate the community in Bridges and kick off the discernment process for those who would want to get trained as a mentor, GA facilitator, or help out with meals.

Peoria District Council (100,000 population with six conferences in the town where the program is run --one large, several mid-size, some very small) was organized at the council level for similar reasons as Waukesha. The Council formed planning teams (Steering, Communication & Training, Collaboration, Getting Ahead Operations), started community outreach with brief overview presentations, and ran three Bridges daylong workshops for interested Vincentians and community partners. This was followed with training workshop, and the first GA class about 9 months after initial planning.

Peoria has no stores and began Getting Ahead with no paid staff, so it asks a lot of some volunteers. After 3 years of growth (2 GA rounds per year), they hired an Executive Director who devotes half of her time to the GA program (the rest to Council and Conference support). Peoria Council now also has a conference-run program in a smaller more rural community similar to Marinette.

Besides the issue of multiple conferences interacting with one city government, common social service agencies, etc., the other factor for organizing at the district level is simply the shortage of leadership time/capacity at most conferences. Many conferences operate at capacity simply responding to current demands for their services. In this area at least, expecting conference leadership to take on something of this scope of organization is simply unrealistic. You have to assess your own situation.

Another reason for a council-level effort, in collaboration with other community organizations, is the need for mentoring and community organizing. Existing Vincentians are already overburdened in most cases, and most who are called to taking on a long term, personal relationship with a mentee are not going to be those who get satisfaction from the current “swoop in and save” home visit. These services will continue, and that is okay since they are needed. It means, however, there is a need to recruit new people to the program--younger parishioners, from other churches in the community, from other agencies. Many mentors and those involved in this program may not be current Vincentians-- they come from the community, are Catholics from other parishes not involved in the Society, or are from other Christian congregations.

What results data is available on program outcomes? Go to the aha! Process web site www.ahaprocess.com

What systems will be needed? At the beginning, not much. You can use a simple Excel spreadsheet to keep track of investigators, mentors, community partners. As your program grows, you may want to consider something like an Access database or Constant Contact to keep track of all contacts and do newsletter mailings.

Where can someone learn more about Bridges communities? Besides the aha! Process web site, you can attend regional or National meetings with other communities who are using these constructs. An e-booklet with summary copies of presentations from the 2014 national conference can be downloaded from the Society's

Systemic Change website: svdpusa.org/systemicchange/Bridges/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty/Preparation-Presentation (Getting Ahead Preparation & Community Engagement-Documents).

For specific contact information for another Bridges community that cannot be found on the aha! Process website, contact Lynn Jackson: ljackson@ahaprocess.com; 832-514-3042.

These steering committees become more active after you have GA graduates, because they bring forward the issues that keep them in poverty, correct? Correct! You may start to plant the seeds when getting organized, but momentum is built through success and GA graduate involvement in community planning.

How successful are summer sessions? How is session scheduling approached with investigators? Summer sessions are possible. Facilitators identify two or three days and times that work for them. The interviewer provides candidates that list of day/time options and asks each candidate which of these work best for them. From that the facilitators set up session one and discussion occurs from there. Once the group meets, they agree on the schedule together. If they want to start and finish during the summer, they may need to meet twice a week. If the group wants to veer from the regular schedule, it is a group decision.

How did other programs decide on the site of their Getting Ahead classes? What are some challenges to look out for? Some investigate potential sites in highest poverty zip codes in the area, and then look at layout to accommodate both investigators and facilitators. Most have a list of criteria that they consider: cost, storage, kitchen facility, accessibility to city bus routes, availability of the space on the days and times needed, and flexibility to accommodate the group outside of their normal hours (e.g. evenings). Others use space offered by collaborating organizations, such as the local YMCA, because of needed services like certified day care.

Costs can creep in if you are not careful--storage fees, once free space now has a charge, etc. Additionally, costs may seem reasonable if you have a grant to operate a specific round of programming, however it could become increasingly difficult to pay for those costs if financial support runs out. Don't assume that grants will always be there.

Finding a facility with day care, or figuring out how to provide that service, is a challenge as well. There are legal implications in addition to any financial considerations.

III. Facilitator Selection & Training

Does GA require facilitators to be trained in the Bridges program and materials as well? Facilitators are required to become familiar with the Bridges constructs, and are required to be trained as a Getting Ahead Facilitator. Due to the Society's contract with aha!, both of these training elements are available at reduced or no cost.

When is Getting Ahead Facilitator training available? Dates for the two-part webinar are communicated in the E-Gazette. In addition, Getting Ahead materials are posted on the Society's Systemic Change website: svdpusa.org/systemicchange/BridgesOutOfPoverty.aspx

Where/how are facilitators trained? Cost? How many facilitators are recommended for a program? Besides the Facilitator Training webinar available from the Society, facilitators receive additional "training" in the sessions, by attending and participating, as well as by completing the exercises/assignments prior to facilitating each session, and by reading additional books and materials from aha! Process. Two facilitators are recommended. They can be Vincentians, community partners, and eventually, GA graduate facilitators.

NOTE: Bridges Individual Lens training can be done locally by the Society using the DVD series available for purchase from the Society: svdpusa.org/materials/Conference-Council/CategoryID/4/ProductID/120. Getting Ahead Facilitator training is now available through the Society at no cost. Look for Getting Ahead facilitator training webinar dates in the E-Gazette.

What skill sets do you look for in potential facilitators? In addition to the abovementioned training, investigators have said the skills they look for in their facilitators include: ability to speak & present, knowledge of subject matter, training in the topics covered in the program, and motivating people. A good facilitator also knows community resources and how to address difficulties in the community. The facilitator must be able to sit and *listen*, without trying to "fix" or "solve".

Is it advisable to use graduates as facilitators? If so, are they compensated (and how much)? What process do you use to select a graduate facilitator? Do you conduct a formal interview? Many GA programs have graduates that make very effective facilitators. Marinette has had a number of investigators whose abilities and presentation skills impressed facilitators, which made transitioning to facilitators easy. At times, you may have to say no to someone who graduated but did not have the skill set to facilitate. Giving graduates good experience--presenting to local businesses or partner nonprofit organizations--would be an effective way to work towards facilitation. Since most graduate facilitators are still on their own journey to get ahead, they should be compensated. Peoria pays their graduate facilitators \$50 per session, or \$900 for an 18-week session.

Generally speaking, investigators should not be subject to a background check, but facilitators should. However, what about a situation where a Getting Ahead investigator/graduate wants to become a facilitator? What process do you recommend? If a background check is indicated, what if something is present on it? The Peoria program, conducts background checks on our mentors (since they work one-on-one with GA graduates), and does run background checks on graduates who wish to become a facilitator. Judgment is needed on whether a past conviction is a disqualifying factor for being a facilitator.

IV. Investigator Selection

What is the interview/screening process used to select investigators? How many interviewers and questions are used in the selection process? What characteristics or criteria do you look for in potential investigators? The initial process (two interviewers, just like a regular home visit) was working with them on a few home visits prior to offering them the opportunity for the class. Interviewers can be Getting Ahead facilitators or post-program mentors. Desirable characteristics and/or criteria include: need, motivation, desire for improving one's life, and an ability to truly use the program to better their lives and create sustainability. We use the Getting Ahead statements on page 126-128 in the Facilitator Notes. Most importantly: candidates choose the program, rather than we choose them.

An example of the Candidate Interest Form used by Marinette to discuss GA with prospective investigators can be downloaded from the Systemic Change website (Getting Ahead Preparation & Community Engagement documents): svdpusa.org/systemicchange/Bridges/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty/Preparation-Presentation

Are investigators paid during the program? How much? If at all possible, investigators should receive a stipend. While learning in the program, investigators are also helping the Society and the community learn about poverty and its barriers to self-sufficiency. Like consultants, they should be paid for their value. The amount will vary by area (but generally equivalent to the hourly wage for a typical session in that area--\$15 to \$25 per session) and paid via cards for gas, groceries, bus, or in cash. Peoria offers investigators the option of taking their stipend as a bank deposit credit at a premium (\$30/session attended vs \$20 for a Kroger card, paid in a lump sum at the end of the program). The advantage to the bank credit is it helps people become "banked", builds credit, and gets people in the mindset of deferring immediate gratification for the future.

It may difficult to put together workshops of 6-10 investigators at the same time within any one city. Because of geographic distances, it may be easier to hold separate workshops in each District. This will limit the travel time of our clients to a maximum of one hour each way. Again, this will likely limit the pool of candidates for each District. In Wisconsin's experience, a typical group had two investigators with travel of 20 miles or less, another two having seven miles and the rest (4-5) with less than one mile. It is difficult to imagine an investigator, no matter how motivated, willing (and able) to travel two hours round trip to 16 or more meetings.

How do you attract a sufficient number of investigators to make workshops successful? Specific examples would be helpful. Marinette had no problem getting referrals from an extensive network of community partners: CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), CAP (Community Action Program), Rainbow House (Domestic Violence Center), Haven of Hope (Adult Shelter), Abundant Life (Family and Adult Shelter), FSET (Food Share Employment and Training) program, school Homeless Coordinators (McKinney-Vento Act), as well as other Social Services, Salvation Army, other area SVdP Conferences, and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC). Organizers send letters requesting referrals throughout the community, even to local employers, attaching a copy of a grant to a local employer, to show the support they have developed by being successful with SMALL groups. Marinette also created a special PowerPoint presentation to take to employers to develop buy-in, for grants, or for training jobs for investigators, either during or after completion. In Peoria, conferences typically see 2000 families a year in home visits, so it is not hard to find 20 people (2 rounds of 10 each). Also, momentum is built with each class, as graduates recommend the program to family members, neighbors, and co-workers.

Questions about Marinette's programs can be directed to Jeanne Harper, SVdP National Lead Trainer and local Getting Ahead coordinator: St. Joseph Conference, 1113 Elizabeth Avenue/Marinette, WI 54143. 715-923-9549 (cell), 715-735-9549 (home), or jmharper1964@gmail.com.

What is the gender makeup in the course, especially given some of the male/female dynamics in poverty? In an initial group, all investigators were females except for one couple. In that particular instance, due to the

mix of personalities, the women in the group were able to encourage the one male to be more outspoken and confident. This single factor actually led to a successful job interview and job for the male investigator. It is advisable to leave the judgment to the interviewers and referral sources as to the mix of male and female investigators.

What happens if you have more demand to get into the program than you have space available? In the event demand surpasses program capacity, you could simply tell them when the next program would be offered. Candidate interest / motivation are the primary selection criteria, not a judgment on our part of who would be the “best” investigator.

How do you work around the investigators’ job schedules? The working poor are frequently in hourly jobs with no flexibility, and many work evenings and weekends. It is important to work around schedules and find a time good for everyone, if possible. Since each session normally begins with a meal, the sessions are typically scheduled either early evening or early afternoon. One way to accommodate different schedules is to offer two sessions per year, one starting with lunch in the early afternoon, and another starting with dinner in the evening. If your program meets once a week, it is often possible for investigators to request their employer to make that day their day off in a flex schedule.

The recommended workshop size of 6-10 investigators seems challenging for a smaller city/council. Can it be done with fewer people, e.g. 1-4, and still be effective? Marinette has run GA for three years now. Their metro area includes Marinette (pop. 10,862), Menominee (pop. 8,599), and Peshtigo (pop. 3487)--less than 23,000 in the Tri City area. They had 12-15 referrals for each class (16-week programs once a year for the last three years). They have never had more than eight attendees at the first meeting and by the third session were usually down to five or six investigators. This 20-25% dropout rate is typical, per aha! Process. The smallest group at graduation was four. This was problematic for the last four weeks, because discussion really needs 6-8 to work sufficiently. Smaller groups miss out on investigators challenging and encouraging each other. We discourage planning a program with only 1-2 investigators, as it would shift the discussion dynamic too much towards the facilitators “teaching” instead of facilitating a process in which the investigators learn from each other and take ownership for their learning and plans.

What portion of investigators comes from conference home visit referrals vs. referrals from other organizations? Organizations serving people in poverty frequently work with the same individuals, so in many cases, the referral is generally someone we have worked with and visited in their home. In the past, 80-90% of the investigators had a relationship with SVdP prior to the GA program. When they come from a community organization, usually the Society referred them there in the first place. Through that work, they learn of a new GA group. Relationships with other service providers in the community are essential in developing referrals both ways--each program offers different services, so we all work together to avoid duplication. Many referrals also come from previous graduates of the program. Our community has a history with Bridges of almost 10 years, providing *Bridges out of Poverty* and *Framework for Understanding Poverty* through college or community meetings and trainings. SVdP just took up Getting Ahead because we knew we had to do something more for those we were serving--something to bring stability to their lives and homes. It was a natural movement to go into mentoring some of our friends in need.

Aha! recommends diverse groups of investigators. Does this mean diversity of economic class? How do you go about recruiting members from the wealthy economic grouping? Recruiting middle class members may be a bit easier, since they could be co-facilitators, but that could present a similar problem. Any experience or comments? The issue of diversity comes up in a couple of places in the Bridges material. In the case of a group of investigators in a Getting Ahead program, aha! suggests that a diverse group across the continuum of stability shown on page seven of the Facilitator Notes is desired, as the different experiences of the investigators will enable them to learn from each other. All of them are likely to be in poverty, ranging from situational to generational. You would not recruit wealthy to be an investigator. Investigators will be people

who want to work on getting their GED and develop a sense of competitiveness and strength, and will come from generational poverty but want to break out of this cycle. This is the continuum.

Aha! also advocates creating an environment where all economic classes--poverty, middle class, and wealthy--are at the community "decision making table." That way all perspectives are engaged. That is where the wealthy come in to play with a Getting Ahead program--not as investigators, and probably not as facilitators (although possible), but as supporters and partners in making the community more successful and sustainable.

V. Facilitator Tips

Should facilitators complete all the exercises and activities in the investigator workbook before facilitating a program?

Yes, that is the best way to understand the material and what you will be asking each investigator to do. It is important to have done anything that you will ask an investigator to do. Each of us will have our own life experiences and our own concepts of understanding the exercises and the process. The exercises are in the modules--read through the modules and complete the exercises as they happen in the purple book. There is a complete list of all the activities and exercises in each module that you can download from the Systemic Change web site, in the Bridges section under Facilitator Aids ("exercises by module"): svdpusa.org/systemicchange/BridgesOutofPoverty.aspx

Is it appropriate to use PowerPoint in the program with investigators? No. The program is designed for investigators to teach themselves by following the manual and its exercises, with the facilitator being just a guide. Introducing PowerPoint presentations led by the facilitator would make it too easy to slip into "teaching." Some facilitators create PowerPoint handouts for themselves as a way to create notes and remind themselves of the goals for that module, but that is a personal resource for the facilitator, not an instructional tool for the investigators. An example of one of these is saved in the Facilitator Aids on the web site ("Sample Facilitator Notes").

How do you handle missed classes? Due to lack of resources (transportation, babysitters, emergencies, 'life in poverty'), missed classes seem inevitable. You want to hold them accountable, but what resources are provided to help them keep up or work around a missed class? Investigators can miss two classes, per aha! Process. Either the facilitators help them make up what was covered, or as the group matures, one of their peer investigators can help them catch up. Facilitators cannot share what the investigators shared personally in class, unless signed releases are received. It is common to offer time for the investigators to update an absent member at the next meeting. If approved by the group, you could also video tape the sessions for those missing.

Some GA programs offer ways to avoid such conflicts: providing and/or paying for babysitters, offering rides in the event of car trouble, providing gas cards to get to the next session as their pay as investigators, etc.

Do all the investigators read each module's material together? It is best to start that way. Later, investigators can read the next session's material at home, highlight questions they have, make notes in their journals, and then discuss it as a group at the next session. Start with questions they had, unless it ties to an activity/exercise they will be doing in that session.

Is it necessary to use all the discussion questions in each activity? Not necessarily, but you are strongly encouraged to do so. Every exercise and all questions build on each other, and take the investigators deeper into self-discovery and learning. If discussion covers the point, it can be skipped, but be careful not to skip just to move faster, you may be skipping questions and discussion important to their learning and change.

GA Facilitator Notes (top of page 47) says: "[Facilitators] don't empower adult investigators; they encourage the use of the power that investigators were born with." What does that mean? The aha! Process belief (and our experience) is that investigators have the power within themselves to make their own changes. We are not doing anything to the investigators. We are simply facilitating, asking questions, being curious.

What support is provided to first time facilitators? Your best support is the Getting Ahead Facilitator Notes manual. It provides excellent guidance. One approach (see above) is to prepare your own set of notes to help keep you on track. Other guidelines on preparation can be found here: svdpusa.org/systemicchange/Bridges/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty/Facilitator-Aids. Remember though--you are not teaching! Investigators discover the answers within themselves. Just follow the workbooks and use the exercises/activities to create the learning opportunities. Above all, pray and trust in the Lord!

There are also monthly free webinars available from aha! Process: ahaprocess.com/free-webinar-series/, and watching Jodi Pfarr or Dr. Rita Pierson videos can be very helpful to learn hidden rules and other concepts. Many are available on YouTube (see the links provided in the Facilitator Aids section on the Systemic Change web site).

How much time should be planned for preparing to facilitate and run a Getting Ahead program?

- **Identify target audience for GA classes (from home visits, community referrals, junior college students):** 3-5 hours to identify and interview candidates
- **Identify the facility:** 3-5 hours coordinating and preparing
- **Organize rotation of churches/groups to provide meals:** 3-4 hours contacting churches and church organizations to set up lunches/dinners for 16 sessions
- **Organize baby sitters & activities for children:** 3-4 hours
- **Order participant & facilitator guides:** 1 hour preparing handouts, resources, etc.
- **Acquire participant & program supplies (flipchart pads, markers, tape, pens & pencils, notebooks, portfolios, carry bag):** 3-4 hours preparing the investigator bags of goodies
- **Decide how stipend will be paid (cash, store card, bus pass):** If you are not funding this directly, and need to get other organizations to sponsor and pay for the cards, allow several hours (Marinette did talk shows on radio--Catholic and local--and wrote biweekly announcements for local papers to get financial sponsors
- **Determine how program will be funded (sponsoring conference, grant, community partners):** 3-4 hours--send letters and/or emails to all chamber of commerce businesses and organizations
- **Determine if program will be offered once or twice a week and at what day & time:** No significant time, but ideally this decision is made in conjunction with the class participants, unless restricted by the facilitators' availability or facility availability
- **Determine how partners will be involved (in conjunction with Community Resources Collaboration team) with funding, participant referrals, graduate support, etc.:** this can take 5-6 meetings, 1 hour each with community leaders
- **Prepare for each session:** A good rule of thumb is 2-3 hours preparation for every hour of session time...so a 2.5-3 hour session would take 7.5-9 hours of preparation. Some of this is joint time for the two co-facilitators to decide who will take which activity or portion of the material. As you may imagine, more time will be spent preparing before the first time you facilitate a program than when you are more experienced.

When do investigators get their workbook? At the first session (Module "0").

The chart in Module 1 (page 14 of Investigator's Workbook) describes yearly income, not monthly income, correct? That is correct. The chart should be labeled Family Size & Yearly Income. For the current guidelines, visit aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-research.

Module 3 page 54 of Investigator's Workbook -The numbers in the text of the facilitator's guide do not match the graphs in the workbooks. This would mean very different numbers of steps. Which of the two presentations is accurate? In addition, the two charts on pages 54 and 55 are from different sources so they do not match each other for 2004. This represents over a 10 percent difference between the two numbers. Both are probably correct, but they are taken from different sources and time periods (there is a difference source / timing referenced in the Facilitator Notes). The relevant point is the *magnitude* of the difference between CEO and worker pay in the US, and between the US and much of the rest of the world, not the absolute number. We recommend using the charts in the Investigator Workbook to structure the activity. Updated data is published annually, and can usually be found in news reports.

Does SVdP or aha! Process have annual updates on the statistics in Module 3? Surely investigators will want to know current statistics. Having investigators research the current data for their area would be a valuable exercise. Take care to verify that the information is coming from a credible source.

Any secrets for getting the investigators to do the required leg work in Module 8? Inspiration and motivation are the keys, and that usually comes from doing the homework, class reviews of each of the exercises, and challenges by other investigators. We have not experienced a lack of motivation-- if they are committed to attending, they desire to do the research.

Do Getting Ahead facilitators share personal information learned about the investigators with the mentors? No. Facilitators should keep mentors informed about what material/modules in Getting Ahead the investigators are going through each week, but personal information should be kept confidential. When and if personal information is shared with the mentors should be driven by the investigators themselves.

Do facilitators need to be supportive of Vincentian spirituality? We have added a closing Spiritual Reflection (Scripture reading, reflection and question and closing prayer) at the end of each module. If you want spirituality to be part of your program, your facilitators need to be supportive of that. They do not necessarily need to be Catholic. Including prayer in the program may exclude some funding sources (e.g. United Way).

How are you sensitive to non-Christian investigators when using your spiritual reflections and discussion exercises? Many in poverty have a deep spirituality, even if they are not active in a church or specific faith. Certainly, individuals can pass/be silent if they desire, as there is no coercion in GA. If your local program has funding from organizations that prohibit any facilitator-led religious prayers, the material can be modified into a generic “mediation and reflection”. Something similar has been used in Indianapolis for some time, and it has never been a problem.

How do you organize your notes and other materials for each module? Do you write in the Facilitator Manual? Having notes for each module is important, and contributes to your ongoing learning as a facilitator. One strategy to keeping all the information organized and logical is to take all the pages of the Investigator book and facilitator manual and have them Module by Module. If there are particular pages (i.e. activities) you think you might write on frequently, you can make photocopies. Some facilitators three-hole punch all the separated pages, and organize them in a binder. Then, when you present, you only need to take the current module with you to the class.

Previous Facilitator Trainings have used a story about a caterpillar to articulate the need and value of systemic change and letting the “mentee” grow. Where is that story located? There are numerous stories and versions--some more meaningful than others. Here is a variety:

- <http://www.rogerknapp.com/inspire/struggle.htm>
- <http://instructor.mstc.edu/instructor/swallerm/Struggle%20-%20Butterfly.htm>
- <http://paulocoelhoblog.com/2007/12/10/the-lesson-of-the-butterfly/>
- <http://www.joyfuldays.com/the-struggle-is-necessary/>
- <http://inspiritual.biz/inspiritual-reflections/2012/11/26/becoming-a-butterfly.html>
- <http://anelbester.com/blog/the-silent-warrior-the-story-of-the-butterflys-struggle/>

VI. Program Organization & Information

How much time do investigators need to prepare for each meeting? Does having sessions on Tuesday and then Thursday give investigators enough time to do what is required in their workbooks? Meeting twice a week is good for a couple of weeks, to get through Modules 1-4 (providing your facilitators, investigators, and facility have that time flexibility). If a group is able to meet twice a week, homework during that time will probably be a challenge, so plan on exercises and discussion occurring in class. The instability of poverty--no time off from work, long commutes to jobs by bus and walking, sick children, kids in trouble at school, etc.--leaves very little time for extra work and quiet thinking time outside of class. Homework between sessions is a real stretch.

The one real homework exercise that you should consider prioritizing is the community assessment. Think about making it a joint exercise between investigators and mentors (in a support role, with goal of relationship building), and in conjunction with the Planning Backward exercise (p. 115-116). Give them four weeks to do the work, before their verbal reports at a session that includes mentors.

After Module 4, a slower pace seems necessary for most investigators. Ultimately, the group members should decide which exercises they could, wanted to, or needed to do outside of class (because they would take more time and thought than they had in class).

What is the process for developing ‘Group Rules’? When are they developed? What are some examples?

Investigators make these up themselves--there is no set of formal rules. Each group has important past experiences that desire a specific rule, so it is the responsibility of each group member to understand why the rule would be helpful. Group rules are developed in the first session, along with other Session 1 activities.

Here are some ideas of rules from past groups:

- Doors lock from the inside to keep out possible domestic violence partner
- Avoid interruptions, unless it is to get further/deeper information
- Attend each class
- Make up any class you miss *prior* to the next class
- Will not miss more than three classes. Three absences triggers vote by group
- Use appropriate language, not swear words (and clarify what constitutes a swear)
- Complete all homework *prior* to class
- *Ask for help*--Mentors can assist with reading
- Keep your commitments to the group and yourself

GA includes considerable focus on political and economic systems. These are controversial topics, so addressing them could lead to heated emotions, strong disagreements, and hurt feeling. Shouldn't these topics and conversations just be avoided? In the Society's experience, the Getting Ahead program has nurtured relationships that engender mutual understanding and acceptance among people of diverse backgrounds. While tension does exist when these topics arise, having frank and candid conversations about them can act as an icebreaker, and frequently brings people closer together.

It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to discuss issues of poverty, joblessness, hunger, and empowerment without considering the public sphere of politics, policy, advocacy, and community organizing. In today's polarized political climate, where proponents of both parties simply shout at and even demonize each other, this can be sensitive. The GA program strives to avoid taking sides, and attempts to strike a balance between individual choices and societal forces as root causes of poverty. It is our experience, and the philosophy of the program, that helping investigators self-identify challenges and appropriate responses is the most effective path to empowerment.

The suggested makeup of a program is confusing. It seems the intent is to have all classes represented--poverty, middle, wealth--but that could be difficult, depending on the particular community. Additionally, it seems like there should be representatives of business/industry, social service organizations, and mentors. Is this right? Depending on the module, these sessions could become quite big. With few exceptions, a typical class will only include the investigators and facilitators. This nurtures an environment of trust, sharing, and growth. While there are certainly opportunities to invite in speakers and mentors, they should not stay in the room for the duration of a class, or be invited to join the class on a regular basis. Some GA programs include mentors to some extent [e.g., the first week when people are getting to know each other; for 30 minutes to complete the Planning Backwards exercise in Module 5 for mentors and investigators to plan an out of class investigation of the community (Module 8); for the presentation of those Module 8 exercises; or to help with the development of action plans which the mentors will support in Module 10]. Otherwise, all sessions, after the pre-class meal, are “closed” to everyone except investigators and facilitators. Investigators should all be low-income. Facilitators and co-facilitators usually are middle- or upper-income, but not always. Some investigator graduates come back as facilitators. The existence of mentors, and the mentor-to-investigator ratio, will differ by community.

Can you explain the Theory of Change Mental Model more completely (Module 2 page 70 of Facilitator's Notes)? This is one of the few occasions where you actually ‘teach’. You should spend considerable time studying pages 67-70 in the Facilitator Notes. *As of approximately June 2018, the Getting Ahead has a new Theory of Change model. You can find a complete guide to teaching the new model in our resource library (svdpusa.sharefile.com/d-s7fa0942a35f40549).

What is a good guideline for how the Getting Ahead modules unfold by session? Each Getting Ahead group is different and it is important to adjust the pace to what is comfortable for each group. The following is Marinette’s experience compared to the sample shown on page 48 of the Facilitator Notes manual:

<i>Session</i>	<i>Marinette</i>	<i>Facilitator Notes</i>
1	Module “0” Orientation & Overview	Module “0” Orientation & Overview
2	Module 1 Poverty & Home MM Affordable Housing as homework	Mod 1 My Life Now
3	Affordable Housing, Debt to Income Where Time Goes as homework	Mod 1 cont’d
4	My Life Now MM, Where Time Goes	Mod 2 Theory of Change
5	Mod 2 Theory of Change	Mod 2 cont’d
6	Mod 2 cont’d	Mod 3 Causes of Poverty
7	Mod 3 Causes of Poverty	Mod 3 cont’d
8	Mod 3 cont’d	Mod 3 cont’d and Mod 4 – Hidden Rules
9	Mod 4 Hidden Rules	Mod 4 cont’d
10	Mod 4 cont’d	Mod 5 Language
11	Mod 5 Language	Mod 5 cont’d
12	Mod 6 Resources	Mod 6 Resources
13	Mod 7 Self-Assessment	Mod 6 cont’d and Mod 7 Self-Assessment
14	Mod 8 Community Assessment	Mod 8 Community Assessment
15	Mod 9 Building Resources	Mod 8 cont’d and Mod 9 Building Resources
16	Mod 10 Personal & Community Plans	Mod 9 cont’d and Mod 10 Personal & Community Plans
17	Mod 10 cont’d	Mod 10 cont’d
18	Graduation	Graduation

There is a reading list at the end of each of the modules. What actions are the investigators supposed to take with these? They are there for deeper reading, if the facilitator or investigator needs to understand the concepts better. Some groups have taken one or two of the follow up reading for assignments to report back to the group on their findings.

Module 2 (page 70 of the Facilitator Manual) has two side-by-side drawings of the theory of change mental model, with two lists of ‘what abstract consists of.’ Is one for the example of smoker, and the second for another example? If so, it is unclear how ‘stages of change’ could be exemplified in a list of ‘Procedural Steps’ for the two examples. First, read pages 67-69. These are imperative to understanding the Theory of Change. People move from concrete (tyranny of the moment) to the abstract, in order to have the ability to create a new story.

Example--an investigator made a plan of action in case she got a flat or had a problem with her car and could not get to work (instead of losing her job, as has happened before). She was proactive and created a new story. She had three friends to call--one to take the kids to school, one to take her to work on time, and one to fix the car for her for the next day. Instead of being stuck in the tyranny of the moment, becoming frustrated and not getting to work on time--as in the past--she created a plan and a new story for her family.

Concrete is solving immediate problems just to survive all day long without time to think abstractly about the situation. They go to agencies and friends to get the concrete need addressed. They need to be able to take in new information in order to make changes--this is the key to increasing economic stability.

Abstract is defined by the words on page 68: detachment, objectivity, new information, new ideas, analysis, thinking, education, plans, and support--all of these are part of the abstract work the investigators need to spend time on.

Once this is drawn, you go to step six on page 69--the economic realities discussed in previous chapter (causes of poverty, etc.) and the Stages of Change--which track the plan of action, the resources needed, and the hidden rules).

This reinforces the need to detach so they can think abstractly, by creating mental models, to see the big picture, connections, relationships, and options. Then, they can move on to developing social capital, making information relevant and meaningful, and using mediation to envision a future story.

VII. Mentoring

What ongoing/mentoring is provided after the program? By whom? Time commitment? Mentoring is now an important part of the Society's recommended support for all GA graduates. We recommend a team of two mentors be assigned to support the graduate as they seek to implement their action plan. Mentors receive specific training as well. Investigators and facilitators decide what other classes could be offered as follow-up, i.e. budgeting and credit classes. There is also a possibility of a support group meeting monthly, which is an open invitation to graduates to communicate and support each other after the program has finished.

Can you clarify the role of mentor? Mentors are a personal resource to investigators, particularly after graduation. Their role is to provide emotional support and encouragement to the graduates as they implement their plans. Recognize that many people whom investigators count on presently to 'get by' could unfortunately undermine them when they try to 'get ahead'. Mentors fill in that gap. Mentors can also be connectors to community resources or to specific skill coaches. Mentors are not an 'easy button', i.e. doing things for the graduate, or providing them money to solve their problems.

Are they assigned to each investigator? How and when is this relationship established? In Waukesha and Peoria, a one or two-person mentor team is assigned to each investigator at the start of the program. Mentors communicate regularly (phone, text, or in person) with investigators during GA to check progress and offer support if needed. Mentors attend pre-session meals at session 0, session 6, and the sessions associated with personal social capital and support relationships (modules 6, 8, 10), and of course at graduation. If invited to any sessions, or if present during any personal sharing, mentors should not participate or provide feedback.

Do mentors sit in on sessions? Mentors do not participate in the sessions themselves. Having 16 "observers" (for a group of eight investigators) sitting in on the session would create the wrong dynamic. These need to be closed sessions to create the openness and trust needed. Mentors will provide background support, checking in periodically by phone, perhaps helping investigators overcome any obstacles to participation. The real relationship starts after graduation.

What training is required of mentors? Waukesha has developed a one-day training program. Materials can be downloaded from the Systemic Change website: svdpusa.org/systemicchange/Materials/Mentor-Training.

If mentors are expected to check in with investigators, would mentors benefit from attending GA facilitators training or something similar? Some mentors have attended the facilitator training webinar to discern if becoming a facilitator is right for them, or to understand what investigators go through. At a minimum, mentor training should provide an overview of GA, including its modules and the exercises in each (included in the training on the website). Facilitators could also provide a brief weekly update to mentors on what material has been covered in each session (since each group goes at its own pace and many modules take several sessions to complete).

What is the best way to find and engage mentors for the GA program? Should mentors be exclusively Vincentians? Should mentors be in place to help recruit potential investigators? Certainly, existing Vincentians could be interested in becoming mentors, but recruitment should not be limited. Invite other parishioners, members of other area churches, and agency partners.

Waukesha & Peoria use a daylong 'Understanding Poverty' workshop with an opening presentation on systemic change and GA, the Bridges DVDs with the discussion questions, and a closing presentation on 'What's Next' (the local plan). Those who care enough to commit a day to learning more about those served, usually want to take the next step and be a mentor or facilitator. Both councils also advertised in bulletins and made community presentations to other churches and agencies, inviting them to the workshops. Interestingly, some parishioners were never particularly motivated to join the Society as they did not feel 'called' to short-term charity work (even though they may have supported it financially or in prayer), but they are interested in doing something

more lasting with people in poverty. Getting involved with the mentoring/GA program is more appealing. This is win-win: existing Vincentians are needed to continue current services, and new people with different motivations (and different skill sets) for systemic change--mentoring, facilitation, or advocacy and community collaboration--get involved.

Ideally, mentors should be identified before the first GA session, as they can be present as the program is explained as well as the mentor relationship.

Waukesha has a great plan for parish and community education about their mentoring program ('Coming Together to Get Ahead'). They developed a brief 'Intro to Poverty' talk at conference meetings (20-40 minutes). Concurrently, they developed a relationship with and worked with the board of the Hope Center, which serves the homeless and near homeless. It was formed initially as an ecumenical outreach to this population and has roughly 100 parishes and congregations associated with it. The Waukesha is getting the message out through them to their parishes and congregations. The brochure/invitation to go back to conferences asking them to use this information to engage their parishes is copied below. This can also serve to attract more people to SVdP.

Waukesha also invites interested people into Education Sessions. The Bridges DVDs are presented, along with a summary of the mentoring program. These are discernment sessions; there is no commitment in coming. They are simply to inform the community. The 'ask' at the end is to be trained as a mentor, facilitator, or member of a support team. Mentors are trained locally and facilitators are referred to the Society's webinar training.

**Invitation to attend an Education Session about Waukesha's new ministry:
'Coming Together to Get Ahead', a Waukesha SVdP Mentoring Program**

When: February 8, 2014

Where: St. Dominic Catholic Church – Marcy Center (18255 W. Capitol Dr. Brookfield)

Time: 8:00 am-2:45 pm (Continental breakfast and lunch provided)

Who's Invited: Vincentians, parishioners - all interested parties are invited!

The Waukesha Council seeks to implement National's initiative of putting 'Hope in Action' through 'Coming Together to Get Ahead', a Waukesha SVdP mentoring program. Why is mentoring important? National leaders explain it best:

In Romans, St. Paul writes: "...*may you abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*"

When Vincentians encounter Christ in our home visits and service to the needy in our communities we are inspired to put God's hope into action through charity and justice.

Through mentoring, we will walk with individuals on their self-directed journey out of poverty.

Through advocacy and collaboration, we will remove barriers and create strong, sustainable communities.

Together through Hope in Action, we will work to end poverty by creating systemic change one person, one neighborhood, one community at a time."

Are you wondering how Waukesha's 'Coming Together to Get Ahead' mentoring program will operate and benefit many people we serve and our community?

Are you considering being a part of the program and wishing to learn more about how to get involved?

Are you questioning who and how you may refer patrons to participate in Waukesha's mentoring program?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, this session is for you.

Seating is limited – sign up now!

Please RSVP before January 31 to Julie McIntyre – phone: [262.522.3241](tel:262.522.3241) or email: jm@stvincentwaukcnty.org

In the meantime, if you want a brief overview of the program visit our website at stvincentwaukeshacounty.org/ and move the cursor to the Home Page tab and click on the 'Coming Together to Get Ahead' tab.

Must all mentors be Vincentians? Catholic? No. While the Society is sponsoring this program, it should be open to other community partners. This is both an opportunity for building collaborative ties with others in the community as well as a chance for extension--growing the number of active, associate, and contributing Vincentians.

How long is the mentoring relationship? It is open-ended. It should last as long as it is adding value to the mentee. This could be years, especially if the relationship grows into true friendship; or it could be very short if the graduate chooses not to utilize a mentor. It is their choice.

What happens if the investigator needs financial assistance during the Getting Ahead program or after graduation? Does that go through the mentors? No. That would interfere with the mentors' personal relationship with mentee. Those needs should be referred back to the conference through their normal process. Mentors can, though, be an "advocate" for the investigator/graduate with the conference or whatever agency they are approaching for assistance.

What do Getting Ahead graduates need to implement their plans? Some resource development programs are not currently available in a given community, so they need the help of specialized mentors or coaches able to help them build skills with certain resources, e.g. budgeting, improving your credit, etc.

VIII. Community Support/Involvement

Do you have a network of community resources that the graduates can draw upon to implement their personal plan? What do those include? How were they developed? You probably already have a resource list for immediate needs a “getting by” list. You also need a resource list that will help GA graduates “get ahead”. This is a new perspective that must be developed by GA graduates in the tough work that starts after graduation. It will lead to fruitful collaborative relationships in our communities. In discussion with others at the table, new ideas and perspectives can be added in the mix. Personal experiences, life lessons, and the sharing of knowledge gained in local experiences helps tremendously. This sharing provides each investigator with an “inside” view of what resources might be needed, and how it was necessary to ask other questions to gain additional information.

Getting Ahead and mentoring, ideally, should be a community-wide program--initiated by the Society, but with active participation of other churches, social service agencies, businesses, and city government.

What are your plans to improve the program’s use in your area? The plans to improve the program’s use in the area include continued outreach to the agencies and organizations that we work with in serving those in need. More involvement within the community would help tremendously. Mentoring could also be added. Active participation from other community groups to help with gas cards, meals, supplies, etc. would make it more grounded in the community and possibly self-sufficient in the future.

When you say that some cities and states have embraced Bridges, what do you mean? In Oklahoma, there is a statewide steering committee, along with steering committees and GA programs in multiple cities across the state. In some cities, city government, businesses, agencies, and church groups have all come together to work on poverty as a collaborative team. For some examples, look at:

- Dubuque, Iowa: cityofdubuque.org/1411/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty
- Schenectady, NY: schenectadybridges.com/
- Stillwater, OK :stillwatercares.org/Stillwater_CARES/About.html

What about the “vertical hierarchy” of organizations that should be involved? There is the core workshop group, which presumably has a sponsor organization. What other organizations should be at the table? Should there be a steering committee? The only organization needed to operate a Getting Ahead is your Conference and/or Council. Collaborations with other organizations are encouraged and enrich the program, but they are not necessary and will differ from community to community. Many GA programs engage other community organizations for planning, meals, mentors etc. Some Councils have then added those new volunteers to the national database as Associate Vincentians, and organized the program as a Council “special work.” The need for a steering committee or champion are more if you decide to tackle a Bridges Community initiative, of which Getting Ahead would simply be an part of a much bigger effort.