

Comprehensive System Improvement Plan
For Workforce Development in Rhode Island

**Submitted by the
Governor's Workforce Board
In accordance with RI General Law §42-102-6**

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The Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) was established by Executive Order on September 22, 2005 to integrate the functions of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC). The GWB was formally established under RI General Law, Title 42-102, in June, 2014, to assist the Governor and General Assembly in planning, coordinating, funding and evaluating workforce development activities in the state. The GWB consists of 21 members representing business, labor, education, community, and government who develop workforce development policy and plans and allocate state Job Development Funds (JDF). GWB members also serve as the SWIB to oversee federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Title I-B funds and activities.

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FOREWORD

In June, 2014, the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) was directed by the RI General Assembly to conduct a Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP) to "facilitate the seamless and coordinated delivery of workforce services in this state, consistent with the goals and objectives of the board's statewide employment and training plan." The statute further calls for the CSIP, among other things, to identify specific barriers to creating a seamless and coordinated system and provide recommendations to overcome or eliminate these barriers, along with a time frame and responsible agencies for doing so.¹

In the fall of 2014, the GWB partnered with the Rhode Island Foundation to expand the scope of the CSIP by producing a comprehensive review and 'map' of RI's workforce development system, including a detailed inventory and analysis of all workforce development programs in the state and their functions, responsibilities, areas of overlap, common populations served, performance indicators, outcomes, and goals.

In the spring of 2015, the GWB enlisted Public Works, Inc. – a nationally-recognized firm with extensive experience advising state governments on matters related to workforce development, economic development, and education – to assist the GWB in the development of the CSIP. Throughout the summer and fall of 2015, Public Works conducted an extensive review of RI's workforce development programs, expenditures, opportunities, and challenges, and their findings and recommendations are incorporated throughout the CSIP. The GWB gratefully acknowledges the efforts of Public Works.

The CSIP includes three sections. The *first section* provides an overview of RI's current workforce development programs and services, and is largely based on data collected by the GWB from all state agency partners. The section also provides "screen shots" from a new on-line, interactive data visualization tool that enables policy-makers and others to view workforce development activity in numerous ways, including by funding source, service provider, type of service, number served, geographic location, and more.² This tool will be updated and enhanced by the GWB on an on-going basis. The *second section* presents an assessment of RI's workforce development efforts, based on feedback from key stakeholder focus groups, and previous studies and reports. It identifies the current barriers to creating a more effective and efficient workforce development system from the perspective of businesses, workers, and government. The *third section* offers recommendations and action steps for strengthening the network of RI's workforce development services. It embodies the vision of Governor Gina M. Raimondo and incorporates substantial contributions from Department of Labor & Training Director Scott R. Jensen.

It is the intent of the Governor's Workforce Board that the CSIP provide a unifying vision and strategy for re-shaping RI's approach to workforce development. By developing an effective network of public and private sector partnerships, RI will create a workforce system that is truly informed by, and responsive to, the needs of RI businesses and workers. The GWB is committed to providing the support, coordination, and leadership to help make this vision a reality.

¹ RIGL §42-102-6

² <http://www.gwb.ri.gov/WFDdata.htm>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Businesses and industries cannot expand without educated, skilled workers.

A key element of Governor Gina Raimondo's economic development strategy – the Ocean State WAVE – is to prioritize workforce development. During its first year, the Raimondo Administration made some key down-payments that invest in the development of a better educated, better trained workforce, including a significant increase in K-12 spending, creating partnerships between high schools, colleges, and employers that enable students to earn college degrees and obtain first-in-line job opportunities, loan repayment assistance for graduates who stay in Rhode Island and work in priority fields, and the development of strategic, industry-led partnerships that are supporting training for the workers that businesses want and need.

The best way to produce a workforce that meets the current and future needs of Rhode Island's businesses and industries is to ensure that Rhode Island graduates an ever-increasing percentage of employees who have earned a degree from a four-year college or university, an associate's degree, or a post-secondary, industry-recognized credential. By 2020, 71% of jobs in Rhode Island will require a post-secondary degree or certification. But currently, only about 40% of Rhode Islanders aged 25 or older have such a degree. In part this is due to the reality that far too many students are graduating with a high school diploma despite not being college or career-ready. We know this because two-thirds of the students who enter the Community College of Rhode Island require remediation before they can begin to take initial credit-bearing course. We know this because the four-year graduation rate at the University of Rhode Island is 42%. At Rhode Island College, the four-year graduation rate is 14%. At CCRI, the two-year graduation rate is a mere 2%.

Until the state can get its PK-12 school districts to improve students' readiness for college and careers, the workforce system is going to play an important role in serving as a safety net that is needed to provide workers with opportunities for adult basic education, skills development, and experiential training to better prepare them for success in the workplace. But Rhode Island's workforce system has challenges of its own. Rhode Island's workforce system has not consistently met the needs of the employers or workers of Rhode Island. Workforce development services are highly fragmented. The vast array of government agencies, community-based non-profits, education institutions, and private providers pursue related but disconnected efforts. There are many reasons for this, including different funding streams, different levels of accountability, and different outcomes being sought. But whatever the reasons for this fragmentation, Rhode Island needs a network of workforce development programs and services that features far greater coordination, integration, and strategic alignment, particularly around the actual and projected needs of employers.

To attempt to identify and overcome barriers to a more effective workforce system, the Rhode Island Legislature directed the Governor’s Workforce Board to produce a Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP) that would facilitate the seamless and coordinated delivery of workforce services. The Legislature asked that the CSIP identify gaps in services provided by existing state employment and training programs, any barriers to integration and cooperation of these programs, and any other matters that adversely affect the seamless delivery of workforce development systems in Rhode Island. Building on the Administration’s efforts to date, this Comprehensive System Improvement Plan aims to reframe the purpose of Rhode Island workforce development so that:

- **Employers are able to find the workers they need when they need them.** Workforce development should be in service of and responsive to the short- and long-term needs of Rhode Island businesses. The workforce development network must know the hyper-competitive realities of the world economy, and then respond appropriately by making whatever adjustments are necessary to connect workers to jobs and jobs to workers.
- **Workers are able to acquire the skills, training, and support they need to obtain good jobs and careers.** Once employers better articulate their needs, the skills that their work demands, and the job openings that, if filled, can enable their businesses and industries to grow and thrive, the agencies and organizations that help supply workers can respond by partnering and networking to address those needs. These agencies and organizations – public, private, and non-profit – must focus on meeting workers where they are and helping them obtain the skills, training, and supports they need to contribute their talents.
- **Governance is coordinated, adequately and flexibly funded, and accountable.** Government agencies collaborate and cooperate to support employer-driven work-force development by playing a complementary role within our state’s distinctive, networked platform. All federal and state funding streams are integrated and aligned to support a demand-driven workforce development system. Performance is measured to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and progress towards goals.

Workforce System Barriers

The workforce programs and services that have been in place for many years in Rhode Island do not function as a “system,” because the term “system” implies a hierarchy, where one entity has the authority to articulate goals and hold a vast array of actors (government agencies, community partners, and others) accountable for progress toward those goals. To view the disparate workforce programs and services offered in Rhode Island as a system assumes that all involved parties are operating according to a pre-defined set of goals and principles and that they are strategically organized and connected in such a way as to meet those goals and principles. But this is not how workforce programming in Rhode Island operates.

Symptoms of this situation can be seen in the following challenges and barriers:

1. Workforce development services are highly fragmented in the absence of a single unified and comprehensive vision;
2. Multiple state and federal workforce programs each have differing rules, regulations, and limitations and are not always the number one priority of their respective administering agency;
3. A widely-held perception is that services are geared toward low to low-medium skilled positions, despite the fact that this is not where employer hiring challenges and, by extension, job opportunities, lie;
4. There is a lack of consistent and dynamic marketing to create and maintain awareness among job seekers and employers of workforce development offerings;
5. Multiple entry points exist for job seekers and employers that increase the risk of customer confusion and detachment;
6. Demand continues to increase for adult basic education and English language training and services;
7. There is a lack of robust connections to K-12 and higher education systems.

Recommendations

To address these and other barriers, this Comprehensive System Improvement Plan lays out a series of recommendations that will improve the delivery of workforce development services and maximize efficiencies throughout the state workforce network. These recommendations fall within three major areas:

Partnerships between government agencies

Government agencies have key roles within the workforce development network, from developing policy to funding activities. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the network connections between government agencies are maximized and able to support network solutions involving non-government agencies. There are two main projects to pursue in the context of improving partnerships between government agencies: strengthening internal structures within agencies to better support interagency collaboration, and creating capacity within agencies to support interagency problem solving as part of daily operations.

As agencies improve their internal supports for interagency collaboration, each agency must take steps to ensure the capacity to work with other agencies exists. Networked government allows problems found under specific circumstances to be articulated to key staff within an agency. Each agency must create clear procedures for evaluating those problems identified and determining if other agencies must be involved in developing the solution. Clear points of contacts should be developed to provide consistent interagency communication and to provide

a clear method for follow up. By improving these partnerships within and between government agencies, Rhode Island will be better positioned to implement interagency projects that get included in the state's forthcoming Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan and solve problems that are identified by Rhode Island businesses and partners.

In addition to this partnership strengthening work, the state will:

- Establish common measures and definitions.
- Establish common information around individuals and service providers.
- Set up mechanisms to improve coordination at the agency level.
- Further strengthen the relationship of the two local workforce areas.
- Establish a mechanism for policy reform based on employer and job-seeker feedback.
- Consolidate planning efforts.
- Improve referral processes between programs.

Connections between labor supply and demand

Connecting employer demand to the supply of available workers in the state is the core challenge of each workforce development program. As demonstrated by persistent hiring challenges across all industries, the direct employer connection to a job seeker is insufficient to meet the workforce needs of employers throughout the economy. Employers rely on other actors in the workforce network to identify, and in some cases train, the individuals needed to fill vacant or new positions. Because no actor in the network can expect to have all the connections necessary to connect employers and jobseekers while ensuring all the needs of each group are met, it is important for each actor to determine what strengths they lend to the network and what purpose they want to serve. Actors then make connections with each other to provide more comprehensive interventions that lead people to employment opportunities.

Networked government allows entities that represent first contacts to build relationships with other entities in an effort to help the individual make subsequent connections. Rather than consolidate programs and try to reduce them to an ordered, sequential set of steps that an individual would follow like a technical manual, entities providing services should partner around common themes to create more effective connections around shared topics. Formal partnerships should emerge from this process and more comprehensive solutions that combine the strength of all engaged entities can be developed. This already has begun to occur through Real Jobs Rhode Island and will continue to expand. While government agencies can help support the convening of these partnerships, this approach requires substantial engagement by all entities. To begin this effort, Rhode Island will pursue two major initiatives:

Reimagining Rhode Island's One Stops: 'One-Stop Career Centers' are intended to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers under one roof. With such unrealistic expectations placed upon the One Stop, the staff have been unable to focus on their greatest strength, career counseling, due to the need to attempt to make all network connections themselves. WIOA provides Rhode Island with the opportunity and flexibility to reimagine the role of One-Stops as a network connections facilitator, connecting jobseekers to the services or industry partnership based on the jobseeker's specific needs and allowing the partnering entities to provide the services and help the individual make subsequent connections.

An important part of reimagining the One Stops is retooling NetworkRI, Rhode Island's Workforce IT platform and job bank, to produce a system that works to collect the data needed by state and local staff, jobseekers, service providers, and employers to make informed workforce development decisions. One key component will be the management of the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List, which will become a more useable and accurate list to catalogue training opportunities and provide performance data on training providers to the public.

Accompanying the development of this web-based repository will be a network wide initiative focused on training career coaches, case managers, and guidance counselors on how to navigate the workforce development network (including the information contained in the training repository), aligning coaching with industry needs, and providing clearer and more refined guidance for job seekers. Career coaching plays a crucial role in all corners of the workforce development network.

Tapping a Workforce of Diverse Abilities: Ensuring that all of Rhode Island's workforce is engaged in the economy requires aggressive planning and performance measurement. Performance measurement can be used to establish common goals for meeting a population's needs and as a method to collect the data necessary to determine what services have been provided and if those services were effective. In addition, information can be collected around the subsequent connections made by the individual during and after the service was provided. The partnership and performance measurement framework discussed here will mirror the efforts to build the same capacity for demand related entities. By formalizing partnership connections in the network and requiring programs to collaborate rather than consolidate, it will become clearer how to connect the labor supply of Rhode Island to the workforce demands of employers. Two recommendations can jumpstart this process:

- Embedding service-providing entities into Real Jobs RI partnerships and other demand based programs.
- Augmenting the capacity of the One Stops through partnerships with additional programs like a new Skills for Rhode Island's Future and a Real Jobs RI Disability Partnership, which can serve traditionally underserved and long-term unemployed

workers to help fill the need to connect more individuals to employment opportunities and help additional individuals access the workforce development network.

In addition to these connection-building efforts between labor supply and demand, the state will:

- Expand demand-driven workforce strategies using Real Jobs Rhode Island.
- Reform the One Stop Centers.
- Improve the functions and usability of the EmployRI system.
- Leverage demand-driven strategies to connect populations with specific barriers to employment opportunities.
- Create clearer access points for small businesses and individual firms to connect and participate in the workforce network.
- Strengthen connections between youth-serving organizations (in-school and out-of-school) and RI businesses
- Inventory and evaluate credentials and their value to employers and academic institutions.
- Dispel myths and stereotypes around the services provided through the workforce network.

Public funding for workforce development

The goal of the network is to use all money in the most effective and efficient way possible. However, the range of funding streams, especially state and federal funds, each have differing rules, regulations, and limitations regarding their intended use. Government agencies and related stakeholders have struggled for decades to use multiple funding streams to share costs associated with activities of common interest. Typically in these situations the need to account for each dollar spent back to the purpose for each dollar allocated can make it difficult to share costs or to blend funding in a useable way. Many of the complaints around the fragmentation seen among workforce programs stem from the inability to jointly fund activities in a comprehensive way. Such issues cannot be resolved at the state level alone because federal funding represents the largest portion of investment.

Rather than continue to call for financial policy reform that seeks to blend funding, the state will work with its federal project officers to develop financial plans that function within the current policy and procedures to use multiple funding sources to achieve a common goal and maintain the accounting necessary to trace each dollar back to its funding source and purpose. To this end, the state also will:

- Determine if existing programs are meeting the needs of those needing services.
- Leverage multiple funding streams to achieve common workforce development goals.
- Correct procedures that may cause delay in payment to service or training providers.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

A SNAPSHOT OF RHODE ISLAND'S WORKFORCE AND THE STATE'S WORKFORCE SYSTEM

There is good news and bad news in Rhode Island's workforce situation.

The good news is that the state's employment picture has brightened considerably and job growth is proceeding faster than expected.

The bad news is that, for the most part, these new jobs do not represent the jobs the state needs to sustain its future – and the state is not producing the workforce needed to attract those jobs.

This report provides a Comprehensive System Improvement Plan for creating the workforce system Rhode Island needs to address this situation and ensure that the state provides businesses with the workers they need to expand and grow in Rhode Island in the 21st Century. That will require creation of a demand-driven, networked system better connecting employer needs to the workforce development entities that help provide the workers businesses want. Section 3 of this report provides detailed recommendations for doing so. This is preceded by a discussion in Section 2 of the deficiencies in the existing system identified through an extensive and interactive research effort that builds off the numerous reports exploring this subject in recent years as well as interviews, meetings, site visits, and focus groups with not just the state agencies involved, but also representatives of employers, employees and both for-profit and non-profit workforce service providers from across the state.

But we begin with an overview of the workforce challenge that Rhode Island faces at present, and the existing system for addressing it.

The Rhode Island Workforce

The state's workforce system is not consistently meeting the needs of businesses and workers – and ultimately *all* its residents – by not creating the dynamic workforce needed for the 21st Century.

As of November 2015, about 28,700 Rhode Islanders were unemployed, down by more than half from peak unemployment, which exceeded 63,500 in 2010 and 2011. The unemployment rate has fallen to 5.2%, down from a peak of 11.3% at the depths of the Great Recession in the summer of 2009 and the lowest unemployment rate in eight years. During the last year, the number of unemployed Rhode Islanders has fallen by more than 9,000. These declines put the state on the brink of what many economists consider to be full employment -- generally when

unemployment reaches around 5% -- and close to the national average. During the last three months, Rhode Island's seasonally adjusted labor force exceeded as many as 560,000 workers, and out of these, more than 528,000 were employed, levels not seen since 2008.

Nonetheless, this number was still lower than the state's peak employment of about 575,000 in late 2006 and early 2007. Why? Because the falling unemployment rate is only partly due to job gains – it is also due to a shrinking workforce. However, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that half of the overall decline in workforce participation is due to Baby Boomers aging out of the workforce. In short, there still aren't enough jobs for all workers – but, conversely, there also are not enough workers for the jobs.

Let's look at that another way. Job growth in Rhode Island during the 10-year period between 2012 and 2022 has been projected by the Department of Labor and Training to produce a net increase of 51,420 jobs – plus an additional 115,950 job openings from anticipated turnover. (See Table 1 below.) That's the good news. Here's the bad news:

This projected job growth through 2022 suggests that Rhode Island will have an economy in which only 36% of all jobs will require at least some college. However, research by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce suggests that by 2020, 65% of all jobs nationwide will require at least some kind of post-secondary education or training.³ In other words, beyond the 36% of jobs requiring some college, another roughly 30% can be expected to require some other sort of post-secondary preparation. Only about one-third of the state's workers will be able to get by with only a high school diploma – but Rhode Islanders without such post-secondary credentials will comprise 42% of the state's workforce. United States Census data estimates of the most recent levels of educational attainment by Rhode Island's workforce include:

- 38.6% of Rhode Islanders aged 25 or older have a college degree (associate's, bachelor's, graduate or professional degree).⁴
- 18.4% of Rhode Islanders aged 25 or older have some college education but have not earned a college degree.
- 28.7% of Rhode Islanders aged 25 or older have a high school degree or equivalent.
- 14.2% of Rhode Islanders aged 25 or older have less than a high school diploma or equivalent.

³ Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, "Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020 (Georgetown University: Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2014). Available at: https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.ES_Web_.pdf

⁴ United States Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment for the United States and New England for Population Aged 25 Years and Older, 2014," 2014 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, Table S1501.

Table 1: State Industry Projections by Major Division

| Rhode Island Industry Projections by Major Division 2012 - 2022 | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Industry Title | 2012 Estimated Employment | 2022 Projected Employment | Numeric Change | Percent Change |
| Total All Industries | 494,130 | 545,550 | 51,420 | 10.40% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 80,648 | 94,500 | 13,852 | 17.20% |
| Retail Trade | 46,905 | 50,585 | 3,680 | 7.90% |
| Educational Services | 44,178 | 45,600 | 1,422 | 3.20% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 44,131 | 49,550 | 5,419 | 12.30% |
| Self Employed & Unpaid Family Workers | 42,300 | 44,325 | 2,025 | 4.8% |
| Manufacturing | 39,623 | 43,685 | 4,062 | 10.30% |
| Government | 31,989 | 31,030 | -959 | -3.00% |
| Administrative & Waste Services | 24,102 | 28,600 | 4,498 | 18.70% |
| Finance and Insurance | 23,310 | 24,950 | 1,640 | 7.00% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 21,472 | 26,000 | 4,528 | 21.10% |
| Other Services (except Government) | 17,370 | 18,200 | 830 | 4.80% |
| Wholesale Trade | 16,843 | 17,100 | 257 | 1.50% |
| Construction | 16,002 | 20,250 | 4,248 | 26.60% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 10,513 | 13,200 | 2,687 | 25.60% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 9,780 | 11,015 | 1,235 | 12.60% |
| Information | 9,566 | 9,365 | -201 | -2.10% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 7,618 | 9,130 | 1,512 | 19.90% |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 5,782 | 6,420 | 638 | 11.00% |
| Utilities | 1,055 | 1,000 | -55 | -5.20% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 716 | 779 | 63 | 8.80% |
| Mining | 188 | 226 | 38 | 20.20% |

Source: RI Department of Labor and Training, Labor Market Information Unit

Nationwide, high skill jobs will represent 33% of job openings, low skill jobs 22% of job openings, and middle skill jobs 45% of job openings. This suggests that as much as 78% of all job openings nationally may require education beyond high school.⁵

What does this mean? If the state does nothing different, the Rhode Island economy will produce significantly more low-skilled (and thus low-paying) jobs and significantly fewer high-skilled (and high-paying) jobs than the rest of the country. At the same time, Rhode Island's

⁵ Achieve, "The Future of the U.S. Workforce: Middle Skills Jobs and the Growing Importance of Postsecondary Education (September 2012). Available at: <http://www.achieve.org/files/MiddleSkillsJobs.pdf>

workforce still will be underprepared and under-skilled even for this lower-skilled job market. In other words, unless economic development, workforce development, and education efforts change, the kinds of occupations that will dominate the Rhode Island economy in the years ahead may ensure that a sizable portion of Rhode Island's workers struggles to make ends meet in lower skilled, lower wage jobs.

Rhode Island's new Raimondo Administration has undertaken a sweeping agenda to create higher skilled, higher wage job openings. Comprehensive improvement of the state's workforce system must be among those efforts.

As just one example as to why, when the November 2015 issue of *Site Selection* magazine ranked site selectors' most important location criteria, existing workforce skills appeared at the very top of the list, surpassing state and local tax structures, transportation infrastructure, land/building prices or supply, availability of incentives, or access to higher education resources.⁶ Quite simply, if Rhode Island is to attract the businesses and industries that will propel the state's economy forward, it must continue to improve the quality of its workforce.

In addition to new economic development opportunities that will require more skilled workers and lead to higher wages for a more robust economy, Rhode Island also must take a hard look at its educational policies to address its long-term workforce needs. With fewer than half the state's adult workforce possessing post-secondary educational credentials of any sort, it is not surprising that the state cannot meet the nationwide expectation that nearly two-thirds of future jobs will require some amount of education and skills acquisition beyond high school. In short, if Rhode Island attracts employers providing these sorts of future career paths, Rhode Island workers may still struggle to fill those positions unless further investments are made today in education and workforce training.

What Has Been Done to Study the Existing System

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2015, the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) conducted a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to collect data and solicited insights and opinions about the workforce system in Rhode Island. As part of this effort, GWB consultants:

- Completed a comprehensive review of documents
- Conducted extensive focus groups with representatives of state agencies, businesses, and community service providers
- Visited netWORKri offices and the Business Workforce Center
- Collected and analyzed data on statewide workforce spending
- Collected and analyzed best practices from around the country

⁶ Mark Arend, "Peach State Three-Peat: Business Climate Rankings 2015" *Site Selection* (Nov. 2, 2015).

The following is a summary of each of these steps.

Comprehensive Document Review

The GWB CSIP team compiled and reviewed documents provided by the Department of Labor and Training, as well as documents identified through independent research and websites.

These documents included:

- **FY 2016 and FY 2107 Biennial Employment & Training Plan**, Governor's Workforce Board (2014). This report includes recommendations for creating a more unified, effective, and employer-driven workforce system. The recommendations are organized into four priority areas: employee partnerships; work readiness; career pathways; and workforce system integration.
- **FY 2014 Governor's Workforce Board Annual Report (2014)**. This report summarizes all of the GWB's activities during 2014, and includes information on its progress implementing the recommendations outlined in the first Biennial Plan (FY 2014-15).
- **Actions for Economic Development in Rhode Island**, CommerceRI (2014). This economic development plan, "focuses on the actions that government leaders, private businesses, the academic and non-profit community can take to ensure a more prosperous Rhode Island," and identifies a new role for Commerce RI as "convener." It details six strategies, including "Activating a 21st Century Workforce."
- **Rhode to Work: A Legislative Action Plan**, Senate Policy Office (2014). This report addresses problems with Rhode Island's workforce system by providing seven recommendations that span system coordination, workforce programming, and educational issues.
- **Governor's Workforce Board's Industry Partnership Evaluation**, 4ward Planning, Inc. (2014). This report assessed the GWB's Industry Partnership program through interviews with business participants and other workforce industry participants. It found that the industry partnerships are considered useful and should be expanded to other industries, and that additional opportunities for collaboration would be welcome. Additionally, participants found that there are too many workforce programs statewide (causing confusion), and a feeling of disconnect between the workforce system and the traditional education system.
- **Building a 21st Century Workforce**, CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission (2010). This report specifically looked at CCRI's role in developing an aligned workforce system. It found a need for: (1) an organizing structure for the workforce system; (2) more funding for CCRI to enable it to play an expanded role in the workforce system; and (3) standardized performance measures of workforce programs for increased accountability. Based on these findings, its four

- recommendations were: (1) the development of a statewide career pathways system that is driven by industry needs; (2) the strengthening of CCRI's capacity to raise the knowledge and skill levels in a greater share of the state's population; (3) encouraging a culture of innovation and responsiveness at CCRI to meet the workforce development needs of students and business; and (4) increased workforce system funding to implement the report's recommendations.
- **Rhode Map RI, Statewide Planning Project** (2014). Rhode Island Rising was the economic development report generated from this project. The first of six goals identified in Rhode Island Rising was to "Provide educational training opportunities to activity a 21st century workforce." Specifically, the policies it recommended to accomplish this goal were: (1) provide opportunities for career growth and help employers attract and retain qualified talent through the empowerment of a single, cohesive workforce training system; (2) support reform for the education system, from early childhood, through K-12, higher education, and adult education; and (3) support apprenticeships and internships by partnering with the private sector and schools and by increasing incentives for such programs.
 - **The Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report**, Governor's Workforce Board (2014).
 - **Advancing System Alignment & Career Pathways Innovations: "On-Ramps" Case Study**, Department of Labor and Training (2014).
 - **Real Jobs Rhode Island**, literature and websites (2015)
 - **WAVE initiative**, literature and websites (2015).
 - **2012 – 2012 Expanding and Declining Industries**, reports, DLT & LMI.
 - **A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education: In Rhode Island, the ten-year time horizon brings Goal 2025 into sharp focus**, Lumina Foundation (2015).
 - **Bioscience: Identifying Employer Needs, Talent Gaps, & Strategies to Grow a Stronger Bio Science Workforce in Rhode Island**, Governor's Workforce Board's Bioscience Industry Partnership (2013).
 - **Building Futures: Skills Gap Study**, Governor's Workforce Board's Construction Industry Partnership (2008).
 - **Rhode Island Defense Industry Skill Gap Study**, Governor's Workforce Board's Defense Industry Partnership (2012)
 - **Rhode Island's Healthcare Workforce: Assessing the Skills Gap and Providing Recommendations to Meet Industry Needs**, Governor's Workforce Board's Healthcare Industry Partnership
 - **Rhode Island Hospitality and Tourism Association**, Governor's Workforce Board's Hospitality and Tourism Industry Partnership (2008)
 - **Why IT Works: Identifying Employer Needs, Talent Gaps, & Strategies to Grow a Stronger Information Technology Workforce in Rhode Island**, Governor's Workforce Board's Information Technology Industry Partnership (2013)

- **The Manufacturing Industry: Producing Rhode Island's Future**, Governor's Workforce Board's Manufacturing Industry Partnership (2013)
- **Economic Impact and Skills Gap Analysis**, Governor's Workforce Board's Marine Trades Industry Partnership (2014)
- **Best Practices in Career Pathways in Rhode Island**, Powerpoint presentation (May 2015)

Focus Groups

In August and September, the Governor's Workforce Board conducted 10 stakeholder meetings with representatives from state government, industry, and the non-profit sector to discuss the state's workforce system. Focus group sessions lasted 90 to 120 minutes each. Each group discussed: 1) the strengths of the existing workforce system in Rhode Island; 2) challenges or weaknesses with the current workforce system; 3) recommendations for ways the system could be improved; and 4) examples of the workforce system experiences from their fields of expertise. Stakeholder meetings included:

- Community-based Organizations
- GWB Industry Partners
- State Agencies
- Labor Organizations
- Local Workforce Board Executive Directors and Chairs
- Higher Education
- Large Businesses
- Small Businesses
- NetWORKri Staff
- Youth Services Providers (high schools, CTE centers, and community-based youth centers)

A detailed list of participants is provided in Appendix A.

netWORKri and Business Workforce Center Site Visits

GWB consultants interviewed managers and staff in the Business Workforce Center and the netWORKri offices in Cranston and Providence. Business Workforce Center staff explained the work they do, how they interact with other state agencies, and provided materials they distribute to businesses. At the netWORKri offices, the consultants received tours of the facility and a complete overview of services provided, observed customers entering the offices and using computers, and were briefed on EmployRI – the state's job matching and workforce case management database.

Analysis of Statewide Workforce Spending

The Governor's Workforce Board compiled workforce spending data from several existing sources, including the *FY 2016 and FY 2017 Biennial Employment and Training Plan*, the *FY 2014 Governor's Workforce Board Annual Report*, and the *Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report*. Additionally, the Governor's Workforce Board facilitated the collection of more detailed spending and programmatic information from all state agencies receiving workforce funding to be used in the development of concept and geographic workforce maps.

Previous Rhode Island Workforce Studies

In recent years, the Rhode Island workforce system has been studied and evaluated by numerous entities, including the Governor's Workforce Board, the Commerce Corporation, the Senate Policy Office, CCRI, and businesses outside of RI state government. These efforts have generated at least seven analytical reports and two reports on state workforce expenditures

While each report approaches workforce issues from a slightly different perspective and frames its recommendations differently, the broad findings in all of them are similar: There is a need for better coordination amongst government and non-government entities in the workforce system, including businesses; there is a need for better training programs; there is a need for more opportunities for job seekers to gain work experience (such as through internships and apprenticeships); and there is a need for the state education system – particularly high schools, career and technical education, adult education systems, and the community college – to more proactively address workforce needs.

There also have been efforts to collect data on the workforce system. The *Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report* (produced annually by the GWB, most recently in late 2015) is a catalog of all workforce funding in the state, organized by state agency. It includes descriptions of all workforce programs these agencies administer. The GWB also has coordinated skills gap studies in a number of industry sectors important to Rhode Island's economy, including Bioscience, Construction, Defense, Health Care, Hospitality and Tourism, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Marine Trades. These studies provide data on current employment, salaries, workers demographic, as well as career pathway overviews and projected workforce needs.

Overview of Rhode Island's Workforce SYSTEM

Effective workforce development is vital to Rhode Island's economic competitiveness. By filling the gaps between the education, training, and skills that employers are seeking and what workers possess, the workforce development system helps individuals to prepare for jobs, find employment, and advance through careers.

The system’s ability to meet employer and worker needs is affected by changing skill levels needed by employers, the capacity of the public system to adapt, funding throughout the system, and federal requirements that mandate how and on whom resources can be spent. Rhode Island’s workforce system spans multiple agencies, focuses on a range of populations identified as needing particular services, and works within some of the state’s key industries.

Workforce Services

While a range of workforce services are available in Rhode Island, most services fall within two broad categories:

- **Employment Services** can reach a large number of people with services that generally cost very little per person. Usually customer-driven, employment services can include online job search assistance, pre-employment workshops, career counseling, resume writing assistance, work readiness, case management, and other activities.
- **Skills Training and Education Services** reach a smaller number of participants. They take more hours to deliver, are intended to increase the ability of job seekers and workers to compete in the workplace, and encompass a range of training and education services. These services typically are much more expensive per person and result in moving participants to a higher level of skills and wages.

As illustrated in Table 2 below, in FY2014, more than 108,000 individuals were served by the workforce development system in Rhode Island. Of these, approximately 15 percent received occupational skills training, 8 percent received adult education and 53 percent received general employment services. In addition, 24 percent of the total served were youth.

Table 2: FY 2014 Services Delivered by Service Type

| FY2014 RI SERVICES DELIVERED BY SERVICE TYPE | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Service Type | Number Served | Percentage of Total |
| Employment Services | 56,843 | 53% |
| Adult Education | 9,150 | 8% |
| Occupational Skills Training | 16,003 | 15% |
| Youth Services | 26,086 | 24% |
| TOTAL | 108,082 | 100% |

The Workforce Development System: Who's Who

The workforce development system is complex and consists of myriad programs offered through multiple public, non-profit, and private agencies that are funded by a variety of federal, state, and private sources.

At the federal government level, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), which superseded the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), establishes the structure through which many, but not all, workforce services are delivered and funded.

In Rhode Island, the following government agencies play important workforce development roles, primarily by administering, granting, and making policy pertaining to workforce development funds, and by providing “doors” into the state workforce system:

- **Department of Labor and Training (DLT)** – provides workforce development, workforce security, and workforce protection to Rhode Island’s workers, employers, and citizens.
- **Commerce RI** – helps businesses navigate the public sector, provides financing vehicles, deploys state incentives, and invests in Rhode Island’s businesses.
- **Governor’s Workforce Board (GWB)** – coordinates the development of state workforce policies and funds initiatives that support the Governor’s workforce priorities.
- **Department of Education (RIDE)** – provides K-12, career and technical education (CTE), and adult education services;
- **The Department of Human Services (DHS)** – sponsors a variety of programs and activities with the goal of workforce preparation, including the **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF)** program, the **Occupational Rehabilitation Services (ORS)** program for people with disabilities, and the **Division of Veterans Affairs (VA)**;
- **Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)** – provides education and training programs to adjudicated youth;
- **The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH)** – provides job readiness, placement and training services to individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues, and chronic long-term medical and psychiatric conditions;
- **Department of Corrections (DOC)** – provides education and training programs for inmates and a reentry initiative for those being released; and
- **Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC)** and its related postsecondary institutions – oversees the two- and four-year schools of higher education.

In addition, consistent with the requirements of federal law, Rhode Island has established two workforce service areas, each overseen by a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) – Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston and Workforce Partnership of Greater RI. Rhode Island also features four workforce career centers, known as netWORKri, that are found throughout the state. These career centers are “One Stop” locations for information and services to adult job seekers, dislocated workers, and youth. Some services, such as an online job bank (EmployRI) and classes on résumé writing and effective interviewing, are available to anyone. Other services, including training to upgrade skills, are available only for those who meet certain eligibility criteria. Services are delivered by a combination of local workforce investment board staff, employees of the Department of Labor and Training, other state agencies, and co-located community-based non-profit agency staff. During the last dozen or so years, federal funding increasingly has shifted from most intensive skills training to lower cost, easier-to-deliver employment services at these netWORKri One Stop Career Centers.

Beyond these public agencies with workforce responsibilities, Rhode Island’s workforce development system also includes a wide array of training and education providers who receive public and private funds to deliver the workforce development services that are described above. These training and education providers include:

Public Sector

- Elementary and Secondary Schools (including Career & Technical Education)
- netWORKri One Stop Career Centers
- Department of Corrections
- University of Rhode Island
- Rhode Island College
- Community College of Rhode Island

Community-Based Organizations

- Adult Education providers
- YouthWORKS411 centers
- Non-profit skills training providers
- Services for special populations

Other

- Employers and employer associations
- GWB Industry Partnerships
- Labor-Management programs
- Apprenticeship programs
- Private colleges and universities
- Proprietary skills training providers

Workforce System Funding

Workforce funding comes largely from a mix of federal and state sources. In Fiscal Year 2014, Rhode Island spent about \$58 million in public dollars on workforce services, approximately two-thirds of which came from federal sources while one-third came from state funding. Of this amount, approximately \$15.5 million was spent on youth workforce development, \$8.7 million on adult education and \$31.6 million on general employment services such as job search assistance, job referrals, workshops, and career counseling for the “transitional” workforce (i.e., unemployed and underemployed individuals). Approximately 58% of all workforce funding in Rhode Island is spent on the transitional workforce – unemployed adults over the age of 18.

Table 3: Rhode Island Workforce Development System FY 2014

| RHODE ISLAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FY2014 | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | State Funds | Federal Funds | TOTAL | % of Total |
| Youth Services | \$5,934,431 | \$9,609,058 | \$15,543,489 | 26.6% |
| Employment Services | \$5,846,234 | \$25,786,644 | \$31,632,878 | 54.2% |
| Incumbent Workers | \$1,204,225 | \$0 | \$1,204,225 | 2.1% |
| Adult Education | \$5,500,000 | \$3,193,154 | \$8,693,154 | 14.9% |
| System Development | \$1,266,566 | \$0 | \$1,266,566 | 2% |
| Total FY2014 Workforce Investment | \$19,751,456 | \$38,588,856 | \$58,340,312 | 100% |
| State/Federal Share | 33.9% | 66.1% | | |

Federal workforce funds primarily come from the following sources:

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Among other things, WIOA funds:
 - Employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth;
 - Wagner-Peyser employment services administered by the Department of Labor through state formula grants;
 - Adult education and literacy programs;
 - Vocational rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment;
 - WIOA also authorizes programs for specific vulnerable populations, including the Job Corps, YouthBuild, Indian and Native Americans, and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs, as well as evaluations and multistate projects administered by the federal Department of Labor.
 - WIOA also authorizes other programs administered by the federal Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Trade Adjustment Assistance;
- Veterans Employment and Training Service;

- Perkins funds (for Career and Technical Education services at the secondary and postsecondary levels);
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (public assistance for families in need);
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program.

State funding for workforce development comes from both General Revenue and the state Job Development Fund (JDF). The JDF is financed by a 0.21 percent assessment of employers' taxable payroll. The Governor's Workforce Board receives 0.19 percent of these payments. JDF supports pre-employment training, incumbent worker training, youth development programs, adult education, and other workforce development activities.

Table 4, below, breaks down FY 2014 workforce funding in Rhode Island.

Table 4: RI Workforce Funds, FY 2014

| RI WORKFORCE FUNDS FY 14 | | | | | |
|--|----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | AGENCY | STATE | FEDERAL | TOTAL | % TOTAL FUNDS |
| YOUTH | | | | | |
| CTE Secondary School Youth | RIDE | \$3,552,413 | \$3,791,348 | \$7,343,761 | |
| On-Ramps | RIDE | \$19,950 | \$11,750 | \$31,700 | |
| WIA Title I Youth | DLT | | \$4,345,054 | \$4,345,054 | |
| DCYF Youth | DCYF | \$445,000 | \$72,244 | \$517,244 | |
| CTE Incarcerated Youth | RIDE | | \$84,226 | \$84,226 | |
| Youth Success | DHS | | \$1,304,436 | \$1,304,436 | |
| Youth Strategies | GWB | \$1,917,068 | | \$1,917,068 | |
| TOTAL | | \$5,934,431 | \$9,609,058 | \$15,543,489 | 26.6% |
| EMPLOYMENT SERVICES | | | | | |
| Wagner Peyser | DLT | | \$2,130,232 | \$2,130,232 | |
| Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment | DLT | | \$1,183,687 | \$1,183,687 | |
| WIA Title I Dislocated Workers | DLT | | \$1,859,856 | \$1,859,856 | |
| Trade | DLT | | \$2,070,225 | \$2,070,225 | |
| WIA Title I Adults | DLT | | \$3,097,125 | \$3,097,125 | |
| Jobs for Veterans Services | DLT | | \$569,021 | \$569,021 | |
| Senior Community Service Employment Program | DLT | | \$456,934 | \$456,934 | |
| Business Workforce Center Services | DLT | | \$968,662 | \$968,662 | |
| Work Opportunity Tax Credit | DLT | | \$121,044 | \$121,044 | |
| Foreign Labor | DLT | | \$88,956 | \$88,956 | |
| CTE Adults | RIDE | | \$571,023 | \$571,023 | |
| TANF Workforce | DHS | | \$6,251,077 | \$6,251,077 | |
| SNAP Employment and Training | DHS | | \$423,216 | \$423,216 | |
| Behavioral Health Care Programs | BHDDH | \$91,821 | \$2,268,211 | \$2,360,032 | |
| Vocational Rehabilitation & Supported Employment | ORS | \$1,347,468 | \$3,643,149 | \$4,990,617 | |
| Incarcerated Adults | DOC/RIDE | \$2,056,038 | \$84,226 | \$2,140,264 | |
| Innovative Partnerships | GWB | \$1,177,330 | | \$1,177,330 | |
| Jobs Initiatives | GWB | \$774,668 | | \$774,668 | |
| Industry Partnership Pre-Employment Training | GWB | \$251,253 | | \$251,253 | |
| Non-Trade Apprenticeships | GWB | \$67,841 | | \$67,841 | |
| Work Immersion | GWB | \$79,815 | | \$79,815 | |
| TOTAL | | \$5,846,234 | \$25,786,644 | \$31,632,878 | 54.2% |
| INCUMBENT WORKERS | | | | | |
| JDF Incumbent Worker Training | GWB | \$1,168,525 | | \$1,168,525 | |
| Export Training Grant | GWB | \$35,700 | | \$35,700 | |
| TOTAL | | \$1,204,225 | | \$1,204,225 | 2.06% |
| ADULT EDUCATION | | | | | |
| JDF Adult Education | GWB | \$3,500,000 | | \$3,500,000 | |
| WIA Title II | RIDE ABE | | \$2,193,154 | \$2,193,154 | |
| General Revenue Adult Education | RIDE ABE | \$2,000,000 | | \$2,000,000 | |
| TANF Project Opportunity | RIDE ABE | | \$1,000,000 | \$1,000,000 | |
| TOTAL | | \$5,500,000 | \$3,193,154 | \$8,693,154 | 14.9% |
| SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT | | | | | |
| Industry Partnerships Core Activities | GWB | \$1,266,566 | | \$1,266,566 | |
| TOTAL | | \$1,266,566 | | \$1,266,566 | 2.2% |
| TOTAL - ALL FUNDS | | \$19,751,456 | \$38,588,856 | \$58,340,312 | 100% |

*Total funds includes CCRI overlapping funds: \$150,000 Adult Skills Training (CTE Adults), \$19,650 RI Works (TANF Workforce), and \$22,700 for WIA OJTs (WIA Title I)

Additional Funding Sources

Beyond the funding sources described above, additional funding sources also support workforce development programs and services in Rhode Island. These include:

- Other federal funding and grants
- Leveraged resources
- Private employer investment
- Labor unions, via training and apprenticeship programs
- Secondary education
- Higher education
- Additional state investments, such as job training tax credits
- Philanthropic investments

Funding Constraints

Several constraints on workforce development funding are important to mention. As noted above, about two-thirds of the state's workforce funding comes from federal sources. Each federal funding stream mandates a particular set of services, has different eligibility thresholds and requirements, and places restrictions on how funds can be used. For example, Wagner-Peyser mandates employment services and cannot be used for skills training while certain WIOA funds must include certain basic services to customers and cannot be used solely for training. In addition, each funding source requires particular outcomes, and these outcomes and how they are measured are not consistent across all sources. This complicates efforts to establish employer- or employee-centered programs that incorporate multiple funding streams.

These mandates and constraints will be discussed in greater detail throughout Sections 2 and 3 of this plan.

Mapping Current Data on Rhode Island's Workforce System

As part of the CSIP effort, the Governor's Workforce Board undertook to gather as complete data and information as possible from all state entities involved in the workforce system to "map" – both geographically and conceptually – what resources the state currently is devoting to developing its workforce, the source of those funds, what those funds support, and what results they are producing.

That exercise highlighted the fact that the workforce "system" in Rhode Island is not a system at all. The GWB and its team of consultants was not able to obtain complete information from partner state agencies on their workforce programs, and what information was obtained was

obtained only with great difficulty. In sum, the state's workforce entities are knit together loosely at best, and information flow is far from seamless.

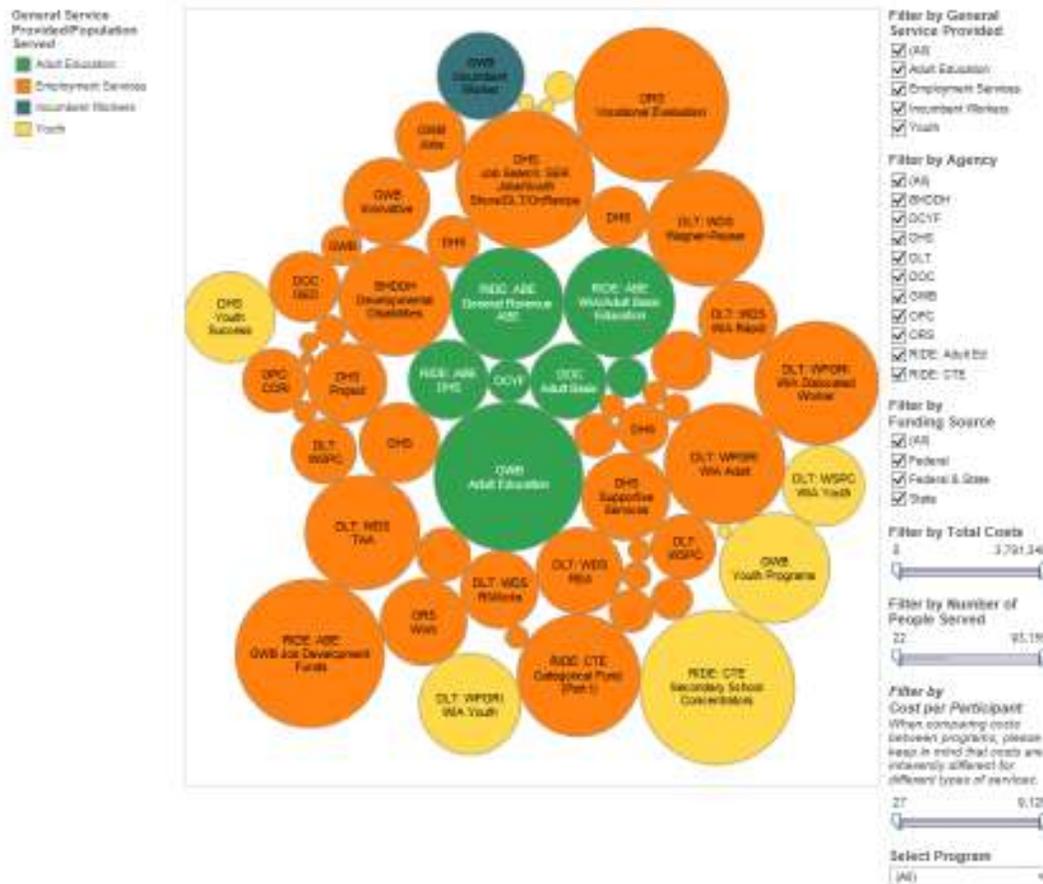
Rhode Island Workforce Mapping Methodology

To facilitate the assessment of Rhode Island's workforce system, two informational, interactive maps were developed: a Programmatic Concept Map and a Geographic Vendor Map. These maps currently can be found at <http://www.gwb.ri.gov/WFDdata.htm>, and are available for public review.

The **Programmatic Concept Map** (see screenshot below) illustrates resource allocation in the state in terms of the types of programs funded and the number of individuals served. To develop this map, data was needed for each workforce program funded by the state, including the total dollars spent and the total number of individuals served in the most recent fiscal year. This data was derived from the Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report (UEP) for FY 2014.

Each program – shown as individual bubbles on the chart – is classified according to the general service provided by that program and total program cost in FY 2014. The four colors represent the general service provided – adult education, employment services, incumbent worker training, or youth services. The size of the circle is proportionate to the total amount of funding.

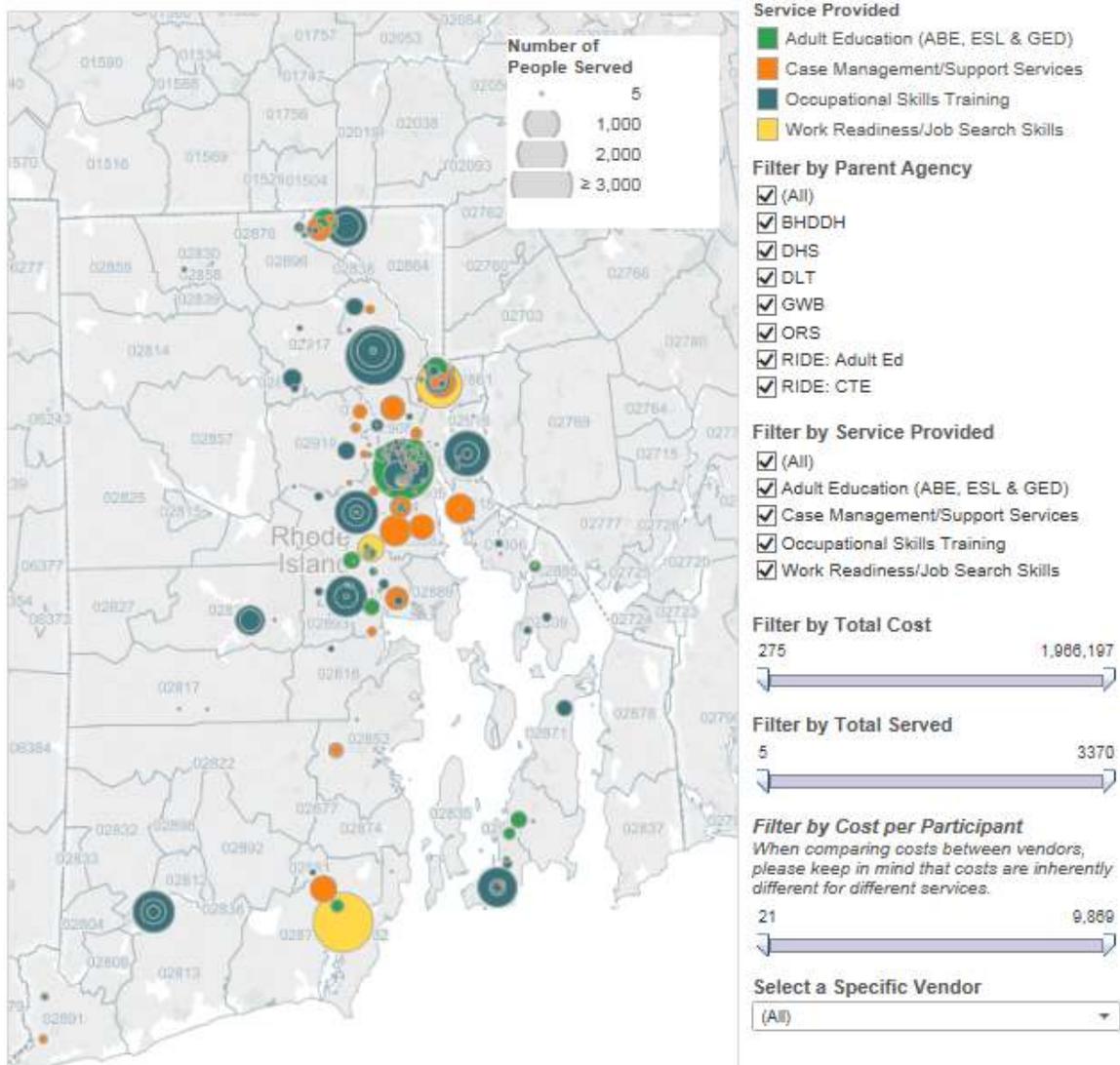
The map is filterable, so viewers can select the parameters they are most interested in and the other data is removed. Viewers can filter by state agency, funding source, total funding, funding per participant, number of participants, and general service provided. When viewers hover the cursor over the circle for a program, an information box opens showing additional information, including: full program name; funding agency; funding source; total costs; cost per participant; total participants served; demographics of those served; and some performance outcome measures.



The **Geographic Vendor Map** (see screenshot below) illustrates the geographic distribution of providers of workforce development services grouped into four categories:

- Adult Education, which includes Adult Basic Education, English-as-a-Second Language, and General Educational Development services
- Case Management/Support Services, which helps agencies and vendors monitor the services that individuals are receiving, the progress they are making towards their individual employment goals, and the supports they need to reach self-sufficiency and gainful employment.
- Occupational Skills Training, which helps employees gain skills and experience that employers need and want.

- Work Readiness/Job Search Skills, which includes the range of services that help prepare individuals for the workforce and enable them to apply for employment.



To develop this map, data was needed for each workforce services vendor that is receiving funding from the state, including the physical location where services are delivered and the type of workforce services delivered at each location. On a map of Rhode Island showing each ZIP code region, vendors are represented by circles. The size of the circle is proportionate to the number of people served, while the color represents the type of service delivered at that location. The map is filterable, so viewers can select the parameters they are most interested in and the other data is removed. Viewers can filter by the state agency providing funding, type of service provided, amount of total funding received, number of participants served, and cost per participant. When viewers hover the cursor over the circle for a program, an information box

opens showing additional information, including: vendor; funding agency; vendor address; service/s provided; number of individuals served; total costs; and cost per participant.

Data collection for the maps began with a review of the annual state Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report (UEP). While this resource was useful in identifying all of the state agencies receiving and expending workforce dollars, it did not provide sufficiently detailed information for map development. Therefore, the Governor's Workforce Board requested additional information from the state agency workforce partners.

Collecting this additional information proved challenging. To begin with, each program tracks different types of data. As a result, the initial response to the data request resulted in a collection of data that was inconsistent across programs, and thus not useful for the purpose of making comparisons. The Governor's Workforce Board then developed and distributed a spreadsheet into which the other state agencies could input their data. The data request included not only the specific items needed for the maps as described above, but supplemental data that would also appear on the map to provide additional details about the programs. Supplemental data included cost per participant, administrative costs, performance measure outcomes, and demographic data pertaining to program participants. This level of detail was provided by some, but not all, state agency resource partners.

A final push to collect just the information needed for mapping purposes provided enough data points to allow for the development of maps that provide an informative, though incomplete, picture of workforce resource allocation across Rhode Island. The interactive maps were developed using Tableau Public 9.0.

Rhode Island Workforce Mapping Analysis

The **Programmatic Concept Map** provides a graphic depiction of the total state and federal funding and number of people served for 64 unique publicly- administered workforce programs that provide direct services and/or contract with vendors. While imperfect, this represents a fairly complete view of the public workforce system. The agencies with programs included are the Department of Labor and Training (DLT), the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Office of Rehabilitatve Services (ORS), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH), the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB), the Office of the Post-secondary Commissioner (OPC), and the Department of Education (RIDE). Funding amounts do not include funds from charitable giving, worker training provided directly by employers, or other non-governmental sources.

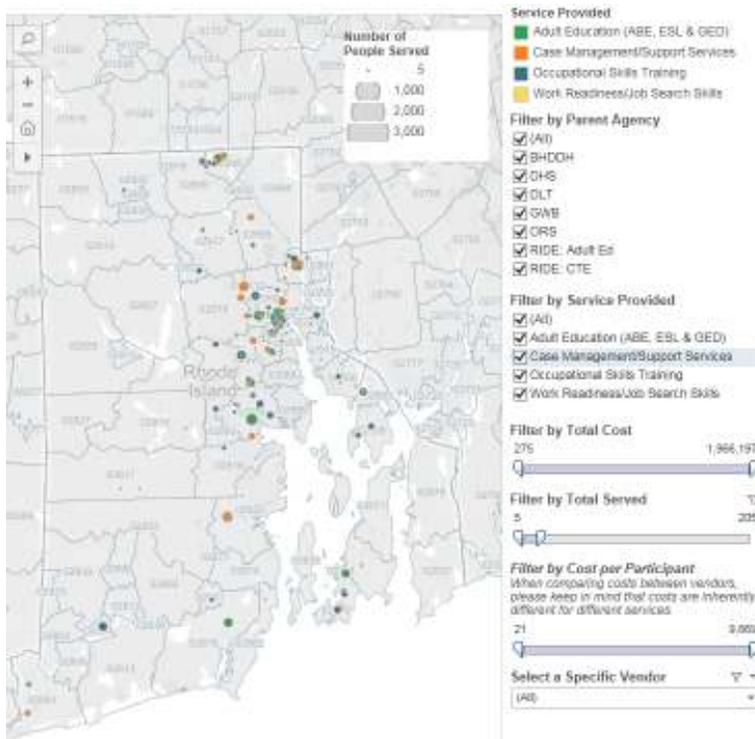
As noted earlier, more than \$58.3 million in total funding is represented in the map, comprised of about 66% federal funds (\$38.6 million) and 34% state funds (\$19.7 million). A more detailed

analysis of UEP data suggests that a number of workforce programs serve very few individuals. Out of the 61 programs for which the number of individuals served was reported, 43% served fewer than 300 individuals and 23% fewer than 100 individuals. The large number of relatively small programs is further illustrated by the Geographic Vendor Map, which shows that 128 vendors served fewer than 200 individuals, while only 11 vendors served greater than 1,000 individuals.

While some of the programs are tailored for very unique populations, such as the incarcerated, the number of small programs may be an indication that the state is spreading its resources too thin and should focus its resources on funding fewer providers who can demonstrate success. By consolidating and streamlining programs so that the universe of programs that businesses and individuals need to navigate, the state’s workforce system would also become more manageable to stakeholders.

Expenditures per program and per participant also vary widely based on the number and needs of participants served. For example, the cost per participant ranged from \$9,119 for intensive training and services funded by the DLT’s Trade Adjustment Assistance program, to a mere \$26 for DLT to administer the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. The average cost per individual served across all programs was \$559. Some programs cost more per person because the services provided are individualized or intense, and as a result, yield better long-term results. While higher cost per individual programs may net better long term results, being able to review the success of all programs on a regular basis would assist the state in making strategic decisions about resource allocation.

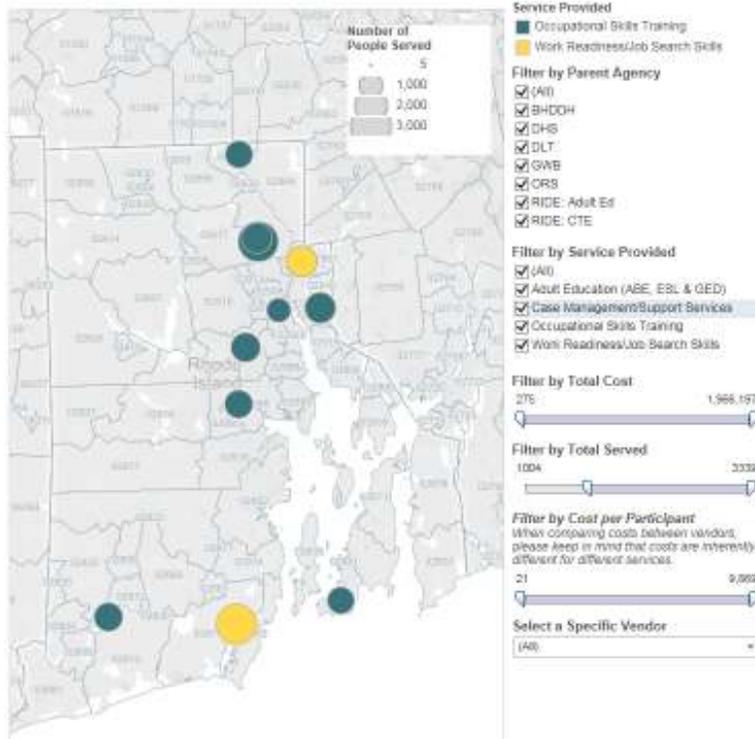
Vendors that served <200 individuals



For the **Geographic Vendor Map**, location and service data was collected for 340 unique vendors that receive funding from a state agency partner. Of these vendors, 59 had out-of-state addresses and therefore are not represented on the Geographic Vendor Map. Vendors that served fewer than five publicly-funded individuals are also not included on the map.

There are 173 unique vendors in Rhode Island shown on the map. Vendors are shown for the following state agencies: DLT,

Vendors that served >1,000 individuals



BHDDH, DHS, ORS, GWB, and RIDE (Adult Ed and CTE). DOC and OPC are not shown because they did not report the use of outside vendors for workforce training programs. No vendors that are entirely privately funded are included on the map.

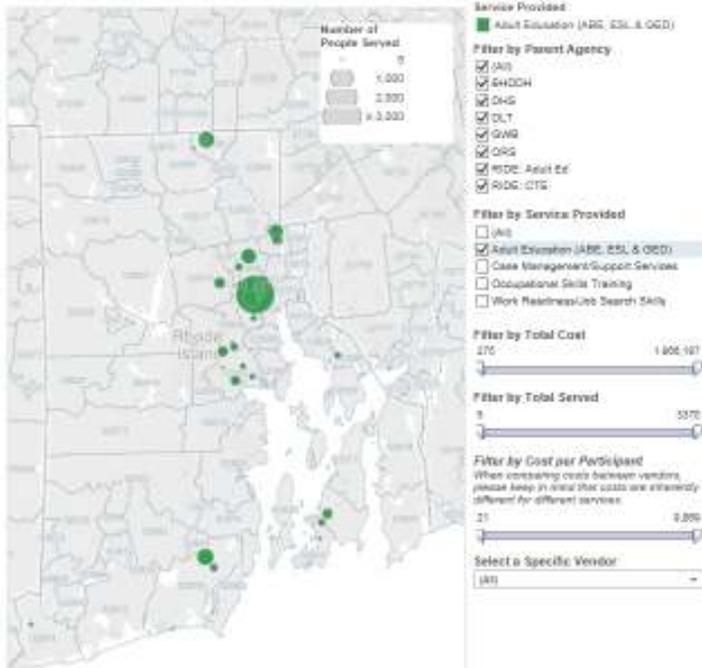
Geographic distribution of services

Programs are clearly concentrated in the north-south corridor between Woonsocket and Providence. For example, there are very few offerings in the western and southern regions of

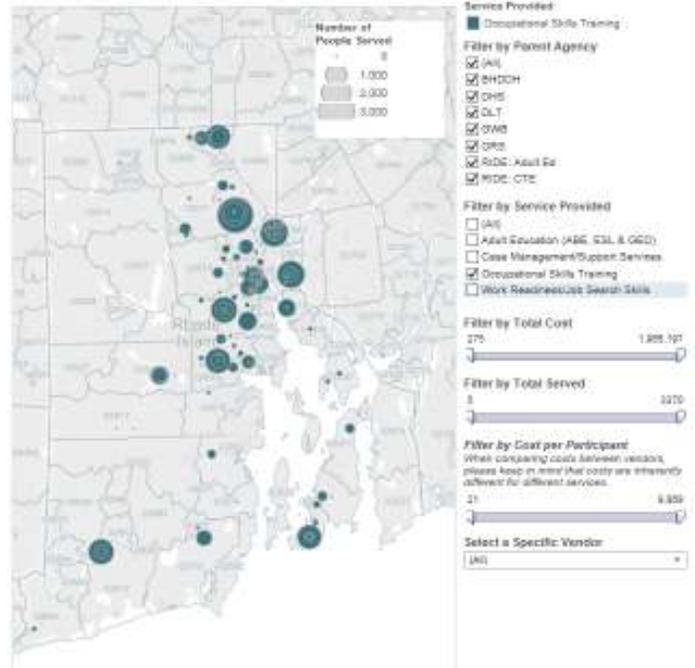
the state for adult education or case management, while occupational skills training is more broadly available. It also seems apparent that the same types of services are funded by multiple agencies. For example, the data suggests that adult education, occupational skills training, and work readiness/job search skills all are funded by agencies such as DLT, DHS, ORS, BHDDH, GWB, and RIDE. While there may be specialized programs to assist targeted populations, there could be value in consolidating and streamlining funding to fewer vendors – making the system easier for users to navigate and providing an opportunity to focus resources only on those providers producing the best outcomes. Additionally, many vendors receive funding from more than one state workforce agency. While in and of itself that practice is not problematic, it does suggest an opportunity for agencies to coordinate and collaborate to improve service delivery and potentially benefit from economies of scale.

Additionally, the vendor data further illustrates the need for the state workforce agency partners to work together to develop a common language and reporting system. As with the program data, it would have been useful to extract data on how much spending was provided for different types of vendors, such as those providing education, training, work experience, case management, and work skills. Agencies were asked to identify the types of services provided

Adult Education providers



Occupational Skills providers



by each vendor, but the categories used were often too broad and overlapping to be useful. For example, nearly every vendor was identified as providing more than one type of service, such as occupational skills, work readiness, and job preparation. The degree of overlap makes it difficult to extract data on how much funding is being spent on different types of services.

Data Collection Barriers to a More Complete Understanding of Workforce System Funding, Efficiency, and Effectiveness

The State of Rhode Island has made significant strides in recent years to collect and analyze meaningful data about the workforce development system and how it is performing. But despite these efforts, significant data-related barriers remain. The primary concern is that the data collected do not necessarily paint a complete picture of employment outcomes. That is, although the data may show dollars spent, the number of individual who have received a variety of services, and some basic outcome data such as whether the individual ultimately got a job, there is much that remains unknown. For example, the data often do not indicate whether the employment was related to the actual training or services received. Sometimes an individual may leave a training program in order to go on to higher education; although most would find this to be a good outcome for the individual, the failure to proceed directly from a training program into employment is reflected in the data as a shortcoming. And the data often do not tell whether employment that is gained as a result of training or services is the kind that can sustain an individual or family, such as a full-time job that provides benefits.

Other data collection barriers include:

- Most agencies (including DLT, ORS, RIDE, DHS, and Corrections) maintain separate participant databases, making it difficult to track participants (and resources expended) across programs, avoid duplicate counts of participants, aggregate outcomes and costs, and the like.
- Data collection is not consistent across programs. Different programs use different terms and definitions, making it difficult to group similar programs and identify the amount of funding being spent on different types of services, or compare the programs' outcomes.
- Not every workforce-related agency submits complete and timely data. In part, this may be due to the simple reality that many agencies that have workforce-related responsibilities are not primarily focused on workforce development. For example, the Department of Corrections is focused on contributing to public safety by maintaining a system of institutional and community programs that control and rehabilitate offenders. Although workforce development is a part of that agency's mission, it is not its primary focus.
- Many data collection categories are too broad or overlapping to enable any meaningful analysis to occur.
- Comparisons of performance measures and outcomes are difficult due to differences in agency definitions of successful outcomes and reporting requirements.
- Lack of detail in the data collected from some agencies makes it difficult to assess performance of individual programs and compare performance of similar services funded by different agencies.
- Some state agencies do not have direct access to data about services that they have funded. Most agencies are dependent on their funded vendors to keep track of their clients. The ability of these vendors to do so is hampered by a lack of funding for administrative oversight tasks and clients having little incentive to report back to the vendors about their own employment outcomes.

It is important to note that because of possible double counting of individuals served, as well as uncertainty in total program costs figures, assessing the cost per person served, while interesting, may not provide an accurate picture of resource allocation. It should be noted that per person costs should not serve as a proxy for efficiency or cost effectiveness, as intensive programs will have a higher per person cost, but may provide very good outcomes for hard to serve populations, whereas inexpensive programs may provide fewer services and thus have a lesser impact on participants' success in the workforce.

These and other data-related concerns will be discussed further in Section 2 and Section 3.

Recent Progress

The challenges facing the state's workforce system have been thoroughly examined. General recommendations have been agreed upon, and more specific recommendations have been provided by numerous players. The state's key industry sectors have been and continue to be studied. Many of the studies described above have been released in the last two years, and as a result, the state has gotten a better understanding of its workforce system. These have led to some new strategic and programmatic developments, including:

- Many businesses report that the Governor's Workforce Board and the Department of Labor and Training are doing a better job reaching out to them and seeking their input than in years past.
- DLT conducted a federally-funded pilot program called "On-Ramps." In 2012, DLT secured a \$2.7-million Workforce Innovation Fund grant from the US Department of Labor. The grant focused on improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and coherency of the workforce system by developing uniform performance measures, implementing career pathways, and through the netWORKri offices, piloting multiple entry points to career pathways through the implementation of a work readiness credential, career coaching, and more work experiences for participants.
- In 2013, the Legislature – recognizing the need for more systemic coordination – statutorily called for the creation of a Governor's Commerce and Workforce Coordination Cabinet with the goal of integrating and coordinating the activities of various agencies and departments, including transportation, education, labor and training, human services, environmental management, and others involved in the state's economy and its workforce, and ensuring consistent implementation of economic development policies and plans. The Legislature also ensured that the Secretary of Commerce would serve as the Vice Chair of the Governor's Workforce Board to ensure better linkages between economic development and workforce development.
- In 2015, Governor Raimondo launched an economic development initiative called *WAVE*. Intended to jumpstart Rhode Island's economy, it directs financial investment in four strategic areas, including workforce development. Strategies in the initiative include restructuring the workforce system to be more responsive to employer needs, building more education / employer partnerships, enabling high school students to earn college credit, providing college loan reimbursements to keep

talented graduates in key sectors in Rhode Island, and investing in more affordable housing.

- In 2015, Governor Raimondo also launched *Real Jobs Rhode Island*, a new initiative to ensure that the workforce system is more responsive to business needs. Through *Real Jobs Rhode Island*, the state invites employers within a specific industry or region to come together to identify common workforce challenges. Linked by a lead convener, these partners identify the challenge, propose the solution, and gather the necessary partners to make that solution a reality. Through this process, job-driven workforce solutions that align with employer demand are created – meeting the talent needs of employers, providing targeted education and skills training for Rhode Island workers, and powering Rhode Island’s economy with a workforce development system that is a true asset to employers. As many of the recommendations that appear throughout this report build off of these efforts, *Real Jobs Rhode Island* will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

The Outstanding Question

In light of this work, the question this Comprehensive System Improvement Plan will answer is:

How should Rhode Island build upon all of the above and implement substantive changes to ensure that the workforce system better meets the needs of businesses and job seekers?

SECTION 2: CURRENT BARRIERS TO AN EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE NETWORK

Findings

Despite the varied perspectives offered on the state's workforce system by the various stakeholder groups, two themes emerged clearly: (1) Everyone agreed the system has been improving and has potential to be a strong and effective system; and (2) they are often frustrated by it or not actively engaged in it. The DLT and GWB are considered the face of the state's workforce system and were lauded for their efforts in recent years to improve communication. However, the other state agencies that contribute to workforce development – particularly Higher Education, RIDE, and DHS – were described by some stakeholder group participants as less engaged workforce system partners. Despite the desperate need for effective workforce training opportunities to our economy and the well-being of Rhode Island residents, the state's workforce agencies and initiatives essentially are neither a system nor a network, but a fragmented attempt to address the needs of various constituencies.



I'm impressed by the partnerships across state, connecting business needs and what the state has to offer.

**- Large Business Focus
Group Participant**

For the workforce system to be successful, all the players – large and small businesses, private and non-profit service providers, and all the various state agencies with a role in workforce – must collaborate and be engaged in providing services that support both businesses and workers. The system as a whole must understand what business needs today and the jobs it will be creating tomorrow, and must prepare workers to fill those jobs successfully based on their interests, needs, and career goals.

This section summarizes the perspectives of workforce participants and partners – representatives of business, non-profits, state agencies, educators, and workers – expressed during the GWB stakeholder meetings, as well as the barriers each faces to participating in, developing, and employing a more robust and responsive workforce in Rhode Island.

The Business Perspective

Businesses want good workers when they need them. Governor Raimondo's new initiative, Real Jobs Rhode Island, attempts to provide just that by encouraging the development of Strategic Industry Partnerships – collaborative groups of workforce players and stakeholders. With Real Jobs Rhode Island planning grants, these Partnerships are now working together to identify the training, education, human resource, and other solutions to meet critical business needs and to develop a detailed Strategic Industry Partnership Workforce Training Plan to implement those solutions. Implementation grants will be launched during the second phase of the initiative in 2016.



Small employers don't have capacity for lots of training. They want to hire someone who is ready the first day.

- **GWB Industry Partners
Focus Group**

Many of the individuals in the GWB focus groups are participating in Strategic Industry Partnerships and are optimistic about the needs-based considerations being added to the state's workforce development strategies. This section provides additional detail regarding current business perspectives on and interactions with the state's workforce system.

What Businesses Want from the Workforce System

Businesses want employees with particular education and skills, but what is most desired – and most often lacking, particularly in entry-level hires – are basic educational foundation and soft skills. Soft skills refer to various behaviors and qualities that help people work with others successfully in any field or occupation. For example, soft skills include communication skills (such as the ability to speak and listen well), professionalism (such as timeliness and appropriate attire), problem solving skills, the ability to collaborate, flexibility, and a strong work ethic.

If businesses can hire someone reliable with basic reading and math skills, and capable of problem solving, working with others, and coming to work on time ready and willing to work, they are often willing and able to provide the specific on-the-job training that person needs for that particular job. However, what businesses are finding is that many inexperienced workers who are hired for entry-level positions often fail basic reading and math tests and do not understand workplace norms and expectations. As a result, businesses put a premium on hiring people with work experience and particularly value those workforce programs that provide training (such as paid internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training) or retrain incumbent – and proven – workers for new positions.

In some sectors, particularly information technology, employees with mid- and high-level skills are also difficult to find. For example, computer programming and other high-tech firms reported having to recruit from out-of-state for mid-level programmer positions.

Unfortunately, many businesses – particularly small businesses, which are prevalent in Rhode Island – lack human resource departments or other staff skilled in recruitment and hiring. They often fail to plan for turnover or growth, struggle to articulate the skills or competencies new hires need, and are not skilled at sorting through resumes, conducting interviews, or selecting new employees. As a result, businesses often cannot find the applicants they want, or end up making hires that do not meet their actual needs.

Businesses say that they want someone with a B.A., but what they really want is someone on-time, who dresses appropriately, who can work with others, who has problem solving skills. What they want is competencies.

- K12 Focus Group Participant

Businesses want a workforce system that accurately projects their needs, provides workers with the training and education to meet those needs, and identifies those workers for them when they are needed. Many of the businesses in the GWB focus groups knew about the Governor’s Workforce Board’s and Real Jobs Rhode Island’s efforts to better engage businesses and were optimistic about the direction in which the state is heading. But much remains to be done.

How Businesses Interact with the Workforce System

Many businesses are actively engaged in the workforce system: Some are members of the GWB, WIB boards, DLT Industry Partnerships, or other collaborative groups; others have participated in job placement programs, received DLT grants, or work regularly with state job developers or ORS counselors. These businesses all liked the increased communication from and interaction with DLT that has developed over the past few years, in particular the GWB’s Industry Partnerships and the Real Jobs Rhode Island initiative.

It’s good to have people come in and ask us about the skills and training we need. We’re starting to see that more and more.

- GWB Industry Partners Focus Group

Other businesses interact with the workforce system irregularly, checking the DLT website occasionally, signing up for DLT emails, communicating with potential partners on specific needs, and/or receiving information about available grants or programs from Chambers of Commerce or other

business colleagues. Many businesses do not interact with the state workforce system at all.

Crucially, businesses find the state's jobs database, EmployRI, too difficult and time-consuming to use. According to staff at both the Business Workforce Center and netWORKri offices, businesses often hire staffing agencies to fill positions; these agencies in turn use EmployRI, charging the businesses for, in part, using a state database that they could access themselves for free.

How Businesses Perceive the Workforce System

Although many businesses spoke positively of the state's increased efforts to engage businesses, there are several misperceptions and misunderstandings about the state workforce system that prevent businesses from fully utilizing it. These misperceptions include:

- Services are only for certain large companies;
- Services are only available for particular industries;
- Services are not available for small businesses; and
- The workforce system only places low-skilled workers.

Misperceptions arise in part because, while there is a great

deal of information available online, many workforce

sites are not linked, and there is no consistent branding or marketing effort to raise employer awareness of programs. Many businesses were not sure which state agencies and programs are included in the workforce

system or who was eligible for them. In particular, small businesses reported that they had not interacted with the GWB or DLT and did not know that they were eligible for workforce services.

Small businesses don't know what's out there in workforce. They need someone to come and show them what's available.

- GWB Industry Partners Focus Group Participant

The focus of the workforce system has been on low-income, low-skilled workers, not people in the middle, but there is a need there, too. In my field (Finance), there are no "entry level/low skill" positions.

- Large Business Focus Group Participant

Additionally, negative perceptions about the state workforce system also discourage business participation, including:

- Paperwork requirements are too burdensome;
- The myriad and diverse program offerings are too confusing; and
- The system is unresponsive to business needs.

Businesses familiar with DLT workforce programs feel that the paperwork requirements are too burdensome and cumbersome, although many stakeholder group participants acknowledged that grant applications have been made easier recently. Businesses unfamiliar with the services – particularly small businesses with fewer resources – were intimidated by the paperwork involved, even though they often did not know the actual program requirements.

Small businesses need a voice. We hired a veteran who had been trained on HVAC. He had trouble getting state licenses, but we had no one to take our troubles to and we were afraid to talk about his needs because we don't want to get in trouble with unions and regulators.

- Large Business Focus Group Participant

Some businesses find that the sheer number of programs, and the fact that various agencies administer them, is too confusing. Many

There are so many services in a fragmented system. It would be nice to have a single point of contact for employers, to have someone that would meet with industry twice a year or something, someone who speaks the language of the industry sector.

- Large Business Focus Group Participant

businesses reported that they would prefer that resources be directed to just those programs viewed as the most valuable. For example, several agencies provide On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs – including two different programs by the WIBs, ORS, and TANF vendors – which employers value because they provide work experience, but the variety of programs and lack of coordination is confusing.

Additionally, businesses reported frustration in dealing with state agency partners other than DLT because they believe that the other state partners do not understand how to talk to business. Many businesses said that they would strongly prefer a single workforce system contact or liaison for each industry. They envision someone familiar with the industry whom they can call to discuss their needs and who can provide guidance and support when using the system.

The workforce system also is considered unresponsive on many fronts. There were many complaints that the OJT programs approval process is arduous and time-consuming (taking up to three months to get approval) and that payments are often slow. Similar complaints about slow payments also were made about grant programs. Businesses reported that they can submit invoices yet not be paid for months, which can be burdensome for many businesses' cash flow management. The workforce system also is perceived as unresponsive to industries' long- and short-term needs.

Commerce RI and others also provide business outreach, but it's hard for them to build trust because there are so many state agencies out there talking to businesses.

- State Agency Staff Focus Group Participant

For example, health care industry

representatives said that the need for nurses is shifting to home health care and community health programs, but that some training programs have not adjusted accordingly. They noted that CNA training programs were developed a decade ago to address then-current needs, but now are graduating more CNA's than the industry can hire. Tradespeople reported that they have difficulty hiring because the state has defunded high school industrial arts programs. Another example cited of the state workforce system not addressing immediate and unexpected needs was its lack of response after Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

After Superstorm Sandy, my town lost 29 businesses and 500 jobs. It had a huge economic impact to the state from the loss of taxes and revenue. It would be helpful if there was a plan for organizations to help them during a crisis. The Chamber kept some of these businesses open but that's not their job - it was the state's job and no one was there, even when we called the state and asked for help.

- Small Business Focus Group Participant

Barriers to Effective Business Participation in the Workforce System

- Misperceptions of the workforce system
 - Workforce services are only for large companies
 - Workforce services are only for certain industries
 - Workforce services are not available for small businesses
 - Workforce system only places low-skilled workers
- Negative perceptions of the workforce system
 - Burdensome paperwork
 - Confusion due to the number and over-lapping nature of some workforce programs, and the multitude of state agencies providing workforce programs
 - Unresponsive to business needs, including burdensome licensing and apprenticeship requirements; delays in payment processing; and an inability to address short- and long-term needs
 - Poor communication between workforce partners (other than DLT and GWB) and businesses
 - No specific industry contacts so businesses do not know who to call
 - Businesses find EmployRI too difficult and time-consuming to use
- Other barriers
 - Businesses' lack of internal business development skills
 - Insufficient marketing of the state workforce system, including lack of branding and websites that do not link
 - Lack of engagement by small businesses
 - Lack of business buy-in to their role in workforce development

None of the perceived and real barriers described by business above are new or unfamiliar to those working in the state workforce network. Most of the barriers have been identified in one or more previous study or studies of workforce development in Rhode Island. However, directly linking barriers to concrete action steps will help to improve Rhode Island's service delivery system.

The Workforce Perspective

How Job Seekers Access the Workforce System

Workers access the DLT elements of the state workforce system by visiting a state One Stop office (netWORKri) or accessing EmployRI, the state's online job database. As noted in Section 1, the state has four netWORKri One Stop career centers: three full-time netWORKri offices in Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket, as well as a part-time office in Wakefield. Formerly there was an office in Pawtucket, but it was closed due to lack of funding. Due to the limited number of offices and their locations, those living in southern or western Rhode Island or on the East Bay do not have easy access to a physical One Stop center.

People don't know about us or our programs – neither workers nor employers.

- netWORKri Staff Focus Group Participant

Those applying for unemployment are told that they must visit a netWORKri office and enter their resume into EmployRI before receiving unemployment payments (although, according to at least one netWORKri manager, actual compliance with that requirement is closer to 80%). Some netWORKri offices advertise job openings and job fairs via local radio stations, TV stations, and newspapers.

There aren't even any signs on the highway letting people know we're here.

- netWORKri Focus Group Participant

Due to a lack of branding or marketing of the state workforce system, however, its services do not appear to be widely known by the public. For example, participants in both the Large Business and State Agency Staff stakeholder group meetings mentioned that when they had been unemployed in recent years, they either did not know about netWORKri – despite collecting unemployment, where state workers are supposed to refer them to a netWORKri office – or had thought that all netWORKri does is to provide access to computers for job seekers or assistance only to low-skill workers.

Barriers to Job Seeker Usage

- Disconnected and confusing points of entry
- Lack of interagency and provider coordination
- Lack of public awareness of available services
- Perception that the workforce system only services low-skill workers
- Lack of workforce system statewide branding and marketing
- NetWORKri offices are not convenient to job seekers throughout the state

Streamlining services and better coordination will help to address many of the barriers job seekers sometimes hit up against when accessing the workforce system.

Employment Services

Employment services include career counseling, resume building, and skills assessment. Most job seekers receiving employment services obtain them for free or inexpensively at netWORKri offices. When job seekers visit a netWORKri office, they fill out a short screening form and then see a job counselor. The job counselor talks with them about their work history and goals, and discusses career options, including the need for education and training, if necessary. Career counseling is based on the individual's interests and education, but can be inconsistent as it depends upon the particular counselor's knowledge of service providers, available job openings, and workforce trends. The career counselor can help people individually with resume writing but more often refers them to resume writing workshops provided at netWORKri offices.

netWORKri can be intimidating. People don't want to enter the system because it's overwhelming and it scares people away. It's so difficult to navigate that people don't go back.

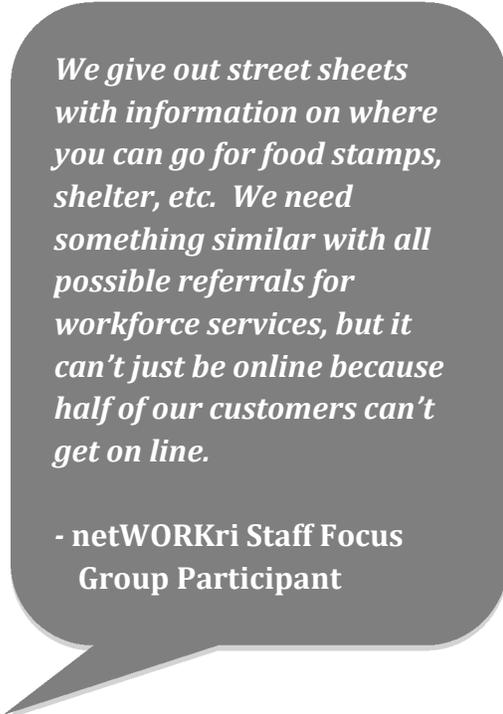
**- GWB Industry Partners
Focus Group Participant**

All netWORKri offices have Prove It!, a computer program that enables testing for hundreds of specific skills ranging from computer competencies (such as the ability to use various Microsoft programs and carry out data entry), general knowledge (such as algebra, typing, proofreading, and email etiquette), and industry-specific knowledge (such as medical terminology, call center customer service, carpentry, and food production). Although job seekers can request to take these tests to demonstrate competencies in certain areas, they are primarily requested by employers to screen job applicants.

There is no common skills assessment – such as for literacy, math, or soft skills – used by any of the state’s workforce partners. From November 2013 to March 2015, the state received a federal grant for the On-Ramps to Career Pathways program, which included a pilot of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) at netWORKkri offices and through GWB Innovative Partnership community-based grant recipients. The NCRC is an assessment-based credential used by employers, educators, workforce developers nationally both to help job seekers identify their strengths, pinpoint skills they need to improve, and market their skills and to help match businesses with qualified job seekers. However, the NCRC pilot program was not continued.

Referrals

NetWORKkri provides a limited amount of in-house training and education. Thus, one of the primary responsibilities of netWORKkri job counselors is to provide job seekers with referrals to education and training programs to improve their qualifications for employment. Job counselors also refer individuals to other types of services they may need in order to be successful in obtaining and maintaining employment, such as subsidized childcare, drug and alcohol treatment, affordable housing, providers of free food and clothing, and specialized services for veterans, people with disabilities, and youths. Staff in the TANF and ORS programs also provide their clients with referrals for training, education, and support services.



We give out street sheets with information on where you can go for food stamps, shelter, etc. We need something similar with all possible referrals for workforce services, but it can't just be online because half of our customers can't get on line.

**- netWORKkri Staff Focus
Group Participant**

DLT and DHS both maintain lists of community service providers, known respectively as the “Eligible Training Provider List” and the “Red Book.” Focus group participants voiced concerns

We need to consider DHS as a workforce development door. People there who do referrals need to know about the workforce programs in the community – even ones that are not funded by DHS.

**- Community Service
Provider Focus Group
Participant**

that some providers on these lists are not sufficiently qualified, and that others who are not on the list should be – including providers that offer free training. Some community service providers expressed frustration that it is difficult to get on these lists and that even when they do, they do not receive enough referrals even though they have openings, including some in free programs. These lists are not coordinated between netWORKri offices, DHS staff, or other workforce partners. Despite the agencies’ lists, it appears that, even within a program, referrals are irregular, depending on the service providers with which the counselors are familiar. For example, one netWORKri job counselor who had been on the job for four months did not know about DHS child care grants for job seekers. Focus group participants also noted that DHS had been giving clients an outdated list of GED providers. Because state

computer systems do not talk to each other, staff cannot easily tell if individuals are eligible for (or already participate in) other state programs.

NetWORKri offices also contain libraries that provide information about workforce services, job openings, and support services that may be available to job seekers, but they are not comprehensive and are only accessible in-person.

Although DHS’ TANF counselors provide their customers with referrals for support services – including education, training, and other workforce-type programs – focus group participants suggested that the staff there do not consider themselves part of the workforce system. The primary mission of the program, its legislative requirements, and the training of its staff, all focus on the provision of social services benefits rather than assisting recipients to find and remain in work. Similarly, many other state agency workforce partners may have a role to play in workforce development, but history, funding, mission, and legislative requirements result in workforce services being a secondary priority. As a result, while individuals utilizing programs in state agencies outside of DLT, netWORKri, ORS, and BHDDH may be able to benefit from workforce services, they may not be referred to these services on a regular basis. Additionally, the level of connection and collaboration between the services provided by DLT, netWORKri, ORS, and BHDDH is uneven: DLT and netWORKri are closely connected; ORS participates on the GWB but workforce services do not appear to be closely coordinated; and BHDDH appears very independent.

Education and Training

Education and training services are more intensive than employment services in terms of the hours and staff time required. A limited amount of education and training is provided at netWORKri offices, in part because, other than the Providence office, the offices lack space to provide much training. All of the offices train individuals how to use the EmployRI system. Additionally, the Providence and West Warwick offices have begun providing Adult Basic Education services in collaboration with RIDE.

The netWORKri website also provides links to ALISON, a free online learning resource for basic and essential workplace skills. According to the website, “ALISON provides high-quality, engaging, interactive multimedia courseware for certification and standards-based learning.” However, the program was not mentioned by any participant in any stakeholder group, and it appears to be little used by Rhode Island job seekers. As noted in Section 1, most education and training services are provided by private and nonprofit providers receiving public and private funds.

Some non-profit providers report that they need more referrals to fill spots in programs. Others report that they have full programs and are seeing success, and that with additional funding for capacity building they could expand the services they provide. Adult Basic Education and English-as-a-Second Language Programs are in very high demand; there are long waiting lists for spots in these classes. However, it appeared that some training providers do not provide courses for skills that are in demand by employers.

Job Matching

The state’s primary job matching resource is Employ RI, an online database. According to the EmployRI website:

For **job seekers** and **students**, EmployRI is like having a personal online career counselor who can walk you through the process of analyzing your current skills, finding training, writing a great résumé and searching through jobs to find new employment. For **employers**, EmployRI is like having a personal workforce development assistant, who can post your job orders, select qualified candidates and access the current labor market conditions. **Training providers** can also enter their programs directly into EmployRI for potential students. **Economists**

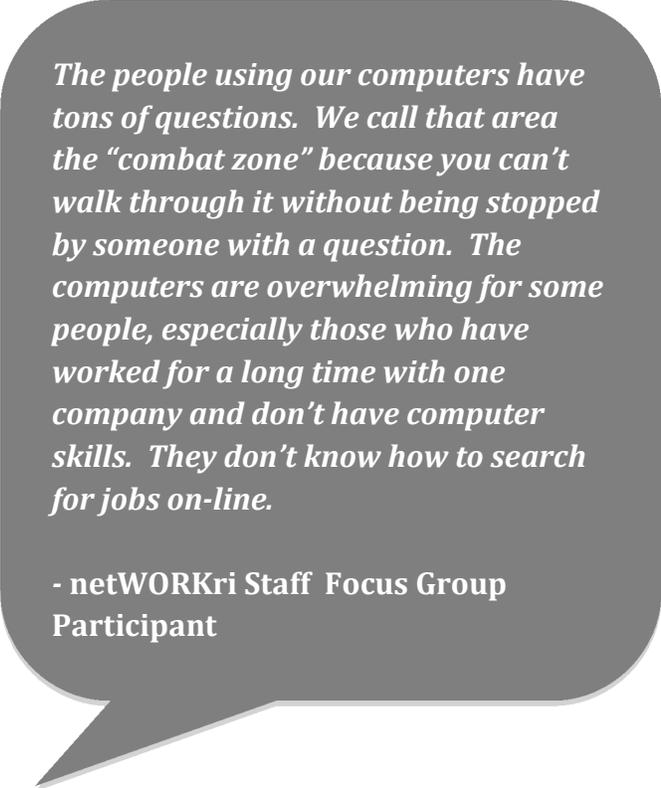
We spend lots of time testing applicants to see if they have basic reading and math skills, and even though they have a high school diploma, about half fail.

- Large Business Focus Group Participant

and analysts can utilize EmployRI's vast database of industry and occupational information including wages and projected employment.

Individuals who visit a netWORKri office are encouraged to develop and/or enter their resumes on EmployRI. NetWORKri offices have computer centers for job seekers, including adaptive technology for people with disabilities. Job seekers enter their resume information and the IT system then uses the information on the resume to identify their job skills, which users also can update manually. Job listings in the database get pulled in from sources such as company online postings and job databases. Staff at the DLT's Business Workforce Center also obtain job postings from businesses and enter these into the system, as well as job openings identified by job developers in the Business Workforce Center or in the netWORKri offices. Job seekers and businesses both can search the system to find good matches in terms of location, industry, and required skill level.

The challenges job seekers face when using EmployRI are that it is time-intensive to use and requires a certain level of computer proficiency. To be thorough, after entering or creating a resume, job seekers need to spend approximately two additional hours going through the job skills listed in the database and indicating which skills they possess. People entering resumes or searching for jobs often struggle on the computers due to lack of computer skills. NetWORKri staff frequently get bombarded with questions from such job seekers. DLT has sought to improve EmployRI and make it more user-friendly, but it is still an obstacle for many job seekers.



The people using our computers have tons of questions. We call that area the "combat zone" because you can't walk through it without being stopped by someone with a question. The computers are overwhelming for some people, especially those who have worked for a long time with one company and don't have computer skills. They don't know how to search for jobs on-line.

- netWORKri Staff Focus Group Participant

In addition to the availability of EmployRI searches, NetWORKri offices also post “Featured Jobs” on bulletin boards and host job fairs. Featured Jobs and job fairs are often advertised via local TV stations, radios, and newspapers.

However, job fairs can meet with mixed success: a recent job fair at the Wakefield office attracted no job seekers at all.

In sum, responsibility for job searching falls almost entirely on the job seeker. NetWORKri job counselors maintain case files on individuals they have worked with and will alert them when there are job fairs or job openings that may be of interest, and one new netWORKri manager reported contacting local governments to try to obtain listings of local businesses so that they could contact them to ask about job openings. As the career counselors often do not have direct connections with businesses, their ability to make job matches may be somewhat limited.

We need to have closer relationships with employers. We need a book of employers so we know who’s looking for people. We now have relationships with some, but not enough with many types of companies, not just large companies. We need more job developers. If we knew about more job openings, that would be like having a golden ticket.

- netWORKri Staff Focus Group Participant

Additional Services Needed for Job Seekers to Successfully Join the Workforce

Finding meaningful, gainful employment can be a challenge for any job seeker. However, there are certain groups that may have or could gain the skills necessary to be productive in the workforce but nevertheless face other obstacles that can derail their best efforts to become and stay employed. People facing barriers to employment include:

- Youth (especially those who have dropped out of high school or aged out of the foster care system),
- Veterans,
- Individuals with disabilities (including the developmentally disabled),
- People with criminal records,
- English language learners,
- People without basic levels of educational attainment (typically measured by having a high school diploma or GED, but meaning basic math, reading, and problem solving skills), and
- People with multiple social service needs.

Many individuals will fall into more than one of these categories.

Youth often are at a disadvantage in hiring because they lack work experience and soft skills. Some youth, such as disconnected youth who have dropped out of school or have aged out of foster care, may not have family to help them and may need additional supports to become independent such as housing, health care, and transportation. Community service providers argued that often the only way to keep them in a program is by providing them with a paid opportunity because they simply cannot afford to pursue activities that do not pay. Without paying opportunities, they are also at-risk of being drawn into crime and/or becoming homeless.

Youths can access job opportunities through internships, summer jobs, and some specialized high school programs:

- Summer youth programs were expanded through increased investment of Job Development Fund monies by the GWB in the summer of 2013 and 2014, as well as by allocation of unexpended TANF funds by DHS in summer of 2013.
- bRIde.jobs is a statewide initiative to connect students with internships in Rhode Island. Employers can post internships and students can post profiles and apply for internships through the bRIde.jobs web site.

Veterans often return home with skills and experience but are unable to work because they cannot obtain state licensing based on their military work experience. As a result, they are required to undergo additional training programs to re-learn what they have proven already that they know how to do. Rhode Island recently has begun to address this issue through changes in legislation. However, many veterans also need counseling and additional social services. Veterans typically access the workforce system through DHS Division of Veterans Affairs or netWORKri offices.

People with disabilities primarily access the workforce system through the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS) in the Department of Human Services. For vocational rehabilitation, ORS provides or refers people to:

- Evaluations;
- Assessments to determine edibility;
- Counseling and guidance;
- Training;

Youth programs are in very high demand. There's lots of research that shows we're not preparing youth for the workforce. They need more of both essential skills and soft skills.

- WIB Focus Group Participant

- Transition services;
- Job placement services;
- Interpretive and other auxiliary aids and services; and
- Community Rehabilitation Programs.

While ORS participates on the GWB, its services are not integrated with the larger workforce system (netWORKri), and, likewise, some netWORKri staff do not seem aware of ORS' services. For example, when asked whether the state has a program to provide funding for businesses to make accommodations when hiring the disabled, an experienced netWORKri manager with whom the GWB consultants spoke simply did not know.

In addition to ORS, there are many private agencies and non-profit organizations that seek to find employment for the disabled. However, according to businesses in the focus groups, these organizations appear to target the same large businesses. These businesses requested that these efforts be better coordinated as they find it difficult to respond to requests from so many groups.

People with criminal records face additional barriers. This population often has low educational attainment rates. But even when they are educated – and many inmates have graduated from CCRI – these individuals find that companies will not hire them because they consider it is too risky. The formerly incarcerated often have additional barriers, such as the need for housing and supportive services. DOC provides some education, training, and job placement and services for inmates nearing their release date, and job placement services and referrals for some of the recently released.

English language learners. According to the GWB's most recent biennial report, 35,000 Rhode Islanders speak English either "not well" or "not at all." Even if these individuals are well educated and have good technical and soft skills, the inability to speak fluently can be a barrier to employment. English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) courses are provided through RIDE's Adult Education Program, as well as through private providers.

Those lacking basic levels of educational attainment often access the workforce system through netWORKri or the Rhode Island Works (TANF) program. The majority of TANF participants have a high school diploma or less, and many are single parents. They have 24 months in which they are eligible to receive cash assistance. If they cannot increase their education and skill levels while in the program, they may lose their benefits before they secure jobs that pay a family sustaining wage.

The challenges facing people with barriers to employment can be grouped into four broad categories:

- Lack of Work Experience, Education and Training;
- Logistical Obstacles;
- Need for Wrap Around Services; and
- Negative Employer Preconceptions.

Lack of Work Experience, Education and Training

The adult education programs with the greatest demand by workers are English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE). Both of these programs are overseen by the Office of Adult Education in RIDE, and provided by a network of community-based agencies. According to staff at RIDE, there is a waiting list of over 1,000 for ESL classes and ABE classes in Rhode Island. RIDE recently expanded ABE services by establishing a self-paced, on-line “learning lab” at two netWORKri offices, facilitated by a professional adult educator who assists adult learners with math, reading, and digital literacy skills.

The programs that businesses would like to see – on-the-job-training, internships, and apprenticeships – are also of high value to many people facing barriers to employment as they provide work experience that is so highly desired by employers.

Logistical Obstacles

Lack of transportation was the single workforce problem mentioned in every focus group. Many job seekers do not own cars, and public transit options are limited. As a result, people who may be motivated to attend trainings or qualify for a job cannot benefit from them because they simply cannot get to them.

Public transportation in Rhode Island, which is limited to bus routes, is often inconvenient or inaccessible to those who need it. Many public bus routes run through Providence, which can be inefficient and excessively time-consuming for riders. For example, a rider in northeastern Woonsocket may need to go a relatively short distance west to Gloucester. Although this would take approximately half an hour by car, on the bus it would take over an hour and a half because they would first have to go south to Providence. Additionally, buses do not always provide service to all communities or conveniently serve major employers. For example, the large industrial park at Quonset Point lacks public transportation that travels through the area. Focus group participants provided several examples of bus stops being a mile or more from major employers, and employees needing to walk the extra distance to get to and from work.

Transportation is an issue. Often there is no public transit out to where companies are, or public transit doesn't run late enough to cover late shifts.

- GWB Industry Partners Focus Group Participant

People can't participate in workforce programs because of lack of other supports, such as transportation and child care.

**- Community Services
Provider Focus Group**

Child care support for individuals in training programs has recently become available under Rhode Island law. However, some netWORKri manager may not know about this service, raising questions as to whether counselors have been adequately trained and are providing referrals to all relevant or needed services.

Need for Wrap-Around Services

The people who face the greatest barriers to employment are those facing multiple challenges, such as a lack of stable housing, food, appropriate work clothing, and basic health and mental health care. The chronically poor and disconnected youth often fall into this category. Individuals with multiple challenges – particularly those with chronic mental health issues - are the hardest to serve as they need personalized social services case management in addition to traditional workforce services.

Additionally, the potential loss of benefits is a threat to many job seekers. Once they begin earning money via a paycheck or apprenticeship or internship, they may be at risk for losing their TANF or disability benefits before they are earning enough to support themselves and their families. The result is a disincentive to seek work. Counselors reported hearing job seekers say that “it’s too expensive to work” and employers said that some people ask to get paid under the table because otherwise they will lose benefits.

The barriers for the unemployed are bigger than employers can address. They start earning money and then lose benefits too soon. They need to be rewarded for going back to work. Employers hear “it’s too expensive to work” or “why should I work when I can collect benefits?” People ask to get paid under the table because otherwise they’ll lose services.

**- GWB Industry Partners
Focus Group Participant**

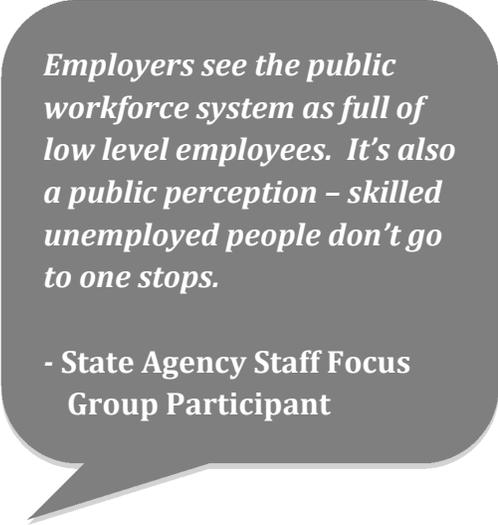
Negative Employer Preconceptions

Employer apprehension may be the most significant obstacle facing people with barriers to employment. Even if they get adequate training and education, overcome logistical obstacles, and receive the supportive wrap-around services they need, many employers simply are not interested in hiring them. Employers are risk-averse and prefer to hire people with the lowest chance of complications. This risk aversion is particularly true when it comes to hiring people with criminal records. Focus group participants reported that they or other employers they know have unofficial policies against hiring anyone with a criminal record. Advocates for youths and people with disabilities also reported encountering similar obstacles with their clients.

How Job Seekers Perceive the Workforce System

Some stakeholders indicated that much of the public does not know the netWORKri offices exist, where they are, the services they provide, or that their services are free. People who do know of them often believe services are for unskilled or low-skill workers only.

While netWORKri offices attempt to provide a single point of entry to the workforce system, these referrals are uneven and the system can be difficult to access and overwhelming and intimidating to those unfamiliar with it. The workforce system primarily relies on EmployRI to make job matches, a database difficult for those with limited computer skills to navigate. Some stakeholder group participants felt that other state agency workforce partners are not considered part of the state workforce system by the public.



Employers see the public workforce system as full of low level employees. It's also a public perception – skilled unemployed people don't go to one stops.

- State Agency Staff Focus Group Participant

Barriers to Effective and Efficient Service Provision

- Inconsistent career counseling services provided by netWORKri job counselors
- Lack of a common skills assessment and/or job readiness credential
- Lack of a comprehensive list of state services and private sector providers for use by netWORKri career counselors, DHS staff, other state agency workforce partners, or the public
- Outside of DLT, state agency workforce partners largely do not consider themselves part of the workforce system
- Lack of coordination between state agency workforce partners
- Over-reliance on EmployRI job matching database which is not user-friendly and requires a level of computer competency many job seekers are lacking
- Insufficient support for community service providers, including lack of referrals and lack of funding for capacity building
- Insufficient resources allocated for job development;
- netWORKri counselors lack of knowledge about job openings
- Lack of sufficient, convenient transportation options
- Lack of sufficient programs to address the most pressing education and training needs: Adult Basic Education, English-as-a-Second Language, On-the-Job Training, Internships, and Apprenticeships
- Insufficient programs to address the unique needs of youths - especially disconnected youths – veterans, people with disabilities, people with criminal records, people with low levels of educational attainment, and people with multiple social service needs
- Negative preconceptions by employers about those facing barriers to employment
- Insufficient incentives to employers to hire people with barriers to employment.

How the State Education System Participates in Workforce Development

Education and workforce development historically have been the responsibilities of separate government agencies, each with their own funding streams, missions, and goals. However, the interrelated nature of the work conducted by these agencies increasingly has become clear to workforce development professionals, and there has been considerable work toward shared goals. The K-12 and higher education systems are an important strategy for Rhode Island's workforce development plans and have opportunities to prepare future workers for the demands of the workforce. Those demands include content area knowledge as well as skills and competencies that can be developed in education settings.

In Rhode Island, some stakeholder group participants asserted that the K-12 and higher education systems have been removed from workforce planning. While some K-12 and higher education programs clearly are workforce-related, some stakeholders felt that education

systems do not see workforce development as their responsibility. State education leaders do not engage often enough with workforce and business leaders.

Higher Education

In recent years, higher education increasingly has been brought into the conversation with economic development, but there does not appear to be a close relationship between state leaders in higher education and employers. In the words of one stakeholder group participant, “industry and higher education officials speak different languages.”

Of particular concern to numerous stakeholders is the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). CCRI features 23 academic departments, ranging from allied health programs to social sciences. In addition, CCRI offers adult basic education courses, a number of career and technical education programs, leadership and organizational development programs, personal enrichment courses (including driver’s education, motorcycle safety, and courses in Microsoft Office applications like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and workforce training and education. CCRI offers a wide array of career and technical training programs, including electrical and plumbing apprenticeship programs, CNA, dental assistant, EMT, food and beverage management, massage therapy, teacher assistant, veterinary assistant, and other programs. CCRI has provided training to trade-eligible dislocated workers, returning military veterans, and Rhode Island’s unemployed through grant funding from the federal Department of Labor.

Some employers described the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) as being less interested in providing much in the way of employer training programs. CCRI does offer a Center for Workforce Training and Corporate Education. According to many stakeholders, CCRI has appeared to be more responsive to its academic and career and technical programs than to direct employer training needs. When approached by businesses to develop industry-specific training programs, CCRI’s response according to many stakeholders has been too slow to be useful. On the other hand, the New England Institute of Technology (New England Tech) is a private college in the state that appears to have a close working relationship with businesses. However, whereas CCRI is open enrollment and inexpensive, New England Tech is competitive and more expensive.

Although the state legislature and others have encouraged CCRI to appreciate that workforce



There’s only one community college in RI and it doesn’t look at what’s needed. My colleague was getting paid by CCRI to teach how to be a travel agent even though they could see that there are no jobs for travel agents.

**- GWB Industry Partners
Focus Group Participant**

development is part of its mission, incentives point faculty to focus more on the institution's academic mission. For example, faculty members typically do not get rewarded if students get jobs or are more employable; they get rewarded for teaching classes, writing textbooks, and consulting.

Other higher education workforce concerns were identified by stakeholders. Some pointed to a lack of internal higher education system communication and coordination. Stakeholders described an instance where the University of Rhode Island, CCRI, Rhode Island College, others were all talking about plans to build advanced manufacturing programs. None of them knew that the others were doing the same thing, nor whether industry in the state had the capacity to employ graduates from all of those programs.

Additionally, some private training providers have developed and are marketing credentials that RI higher education institutions do not recognize. Therefore, some Rhode Islanders work to get training by private providers, but then are unable to apply that training toward a degree program.

Adult Education

More than 80,000 Rhode Island adults – about one out of every eight working age adults in the state – lack a high school diploma or equivalency. Further, an estimated 35,000 working age Rhode Islanders have limited or no English fluency. In order for this portion of the state workforce to have much chance to be qualified for decent-paying jobs, the state's adult education system will need to continue to improve and expand. Although progress has been made during the last 10 years in academic achievement gains and employment placements, more services are needed to ensure that this subset of the Rhode Island workforce is ready to meet the job growth demands of employers.

Adult Education is housed in the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), which funds more than 30 adult education programs throughout the state. These programs provide educational services to adults with a focus on their basic employment needs, but primarily adult basic education (covering academic skills typically learned in first through eighth grade), adult secondary education (covering academic skills typically learned in high school and leading to a credential like a GED, but also industry-specific contextualized instruction in areas like food services, health care, and hospitality), and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL). In addition to RIDE-funded adult education programs, other community-based programs, such as those offered by faith

There are at least 1,000 people on the waiting list for foundation skills and most also need English language services. It's a real untapped employee base.

**- Community Service
Provider Focus Group
Participant**

communities and non-publicly funded community organizations offer some adult education services as well.

The largest demand for services are in Vocational English and Adult Basic Education. An estimated 93% of those taking adult education programs have 8th grade skills or lower, and more than 50% of all adult learners are studying ESL. An estimated 1,200 people are on RIDE's waiting lists for adult education services, predominantly English language learners seeking to enroll in English-as-a-Second Language courses.

Interestingly, some people taking English-as-a-Second Language already have the kinds of soft skills that employers value, but they lack English proficiency that could lead to their hiring. This sector of the workforce potentially is very interested in working, but employers need to be engaged and willing to hire them while they continue to improve their English language proficiency.

Vocational English has high demand. These people may already have soft skills but lack English proficiency. It would be a great way to engage with employers because this workforce is potentially very interested.

**- Community Service
Provider Focus Group**

Data from FY 2015 suggests that 40% of adult learners are employed full- or part-time. Some stakeholders reported a need for more second shift adult education to meet the needs and availability of other adult learners who would like to improve their education and basic skills, but are unable get into a class because they are working.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) services have been expanding due to a number of initiatives already underway. For example, the ALL Access Learning Lounge, which provides ABE and workforce services to underserved populations, and the RI Family Literacy Initiative provides services three days a week at One Stops.

The state needs to ensure that all ABE courses are teaching skills that can be contextualized and built into high-demand industries and career pathways that are closely aligned with Real Jobs partnerships. A number of ABE offerings around the state already are heading in this direction, with instruction contextualized for industries like construction, health care, and hospitality. Currently, nine adult education providers have partnered with six different Real Jobs partnerships. Consistent with the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (WIOA), RIDE should continue to work closely with adult education providers and Real Jobs Partnerships to better align instruction with the needs of Rhode Island's employers.

High School

RI legislation and regulations guiding student opportunities in the secondary school system have made significant advances in the approaches to teaching and learning that include career preparation.

As an example, the FY 2016 budget includes \$1.3 million in funding of the Governor's Prepare RI initiative, which enables every qualifying public high school student to access the entire course catalogs at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island through dual enrollment opportunities at minimal cost to the student. Dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities may enable an increasing number of high school students to sample, if not pursue, industry certifications or make progress towards a two- or four-year college degree while still in high school.

While the RI Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and the RI Board of Education set expectations for high quality education, teaching and learning, local control and policies, funding structures, leadership and capacity is resulting in uneven implementation across the state. Stakeholders expressed frustration in the difficulty in getting high schools to invest more in career preparation when the focus of their elected school boards and activist parents is on content areas, graduation rates, and college attendance rates.

More fundamentally, however, stakeholders felt that the problem is that the K-12 system does not see workforce development as a critical component of the education mission. State policies and curriculum requirements lack focus on career development as evidenced by the fact that high school performance is primarily focused on college attainment rather than encouraging exploration and pursuit of career-related opportunities.

Research supports that teachers in all grades can play a role in career preparedness. Most high school teachers are experts in the content they teach and do not have the education, training, or experience needed to incorporate career preparedness into their classroom instruction. Current teacher preparation programs do not train teachers how to promote career awareness and career readiness, and little professional development is available to link required course content to application in specific occupations or industries.

On a philosophical level, schools don't see their job as preparing kids for work.

- Local WIB Focus Group Participant

One basic concern that arose during the stakeholder meetings is that Rhode Island's K-12 system is failing to ensure that vast numbers of students leave high school college- and career-ready. According to the GWB's most recent biennial report, 66% of students entering CCRI require some form of remedial education, essentially paying to re-learn skills and content that should have been mastered during their kindergarten through high school education. The vast majority of these CCRI students are coming out of the Rhode Island K-12 system.

Employers are getting kids out of school and they are not ready.

- Large Business Focus Group

The limited success to incorporate 21st Century Skills, often referred to as soft skills in industry, as part of the academic program that students must master too often results in too many students not being college- and career-ready. This contributes to students' lack of success in initial credit-bearing courses. During one education stakeholder meeting, it was reported that at one time, RIDE had begun to work with one Rhode Island higher education institution to determine what math skills students need to be successful in college so that high schools could emphasize those skills in high school. Nevertheless, those talks did not lead to any tangible change in standards or instruction. RI Secondary Regulations provide greater flexibility in what constitutes a course to include technical, online, worksite-based, and other non-traditional, non-seat time based learning experiences. However, local graduation policies continue to emphasize seat time – course credits earned when a student amasses a required amount of time in a course – over performance-based competency requirements for high school graduation. This reliance on seat time results in many students leaving high school lacking in basic math, reading, and communications skills.

We used to spend lots of time with career counselors and it wasn't worth it because they couldn't focus on non-post-secondary school options.

- GWB Industry Partnership Focus Group Participant

Demonstration of content mastery of a subject itself is also not sufficient to ensure college- and career-readiness. Learning experiences must include opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts.

More anecdotally, business stakeholders reported that when they hire people who have graduated from public schools, they often are unprepared for work on several fronts: they lack work experience – largely a reflection of their age

and limited opportunities for employment – but also basic math and reading skills and soft skills. Stakeholders from education, youth services, and business all suggested that many high

schools do not have relationships with local businesses. Although business representatives sometimes are invited to talk to students, they report that there is little follow up and limited opportunities to develop on-going relationships that could lead to internships, deeper career awareness, and other job-related opportunities.

There was agreement among stakeholders that more could be done to give high school students increased opportunities to receive work experience and exposure to the workforce. Many stakeholders felt that there were insufficient opportunities for youths to get work experience where they could also gain soft skills. Summer work programs are filled to capacity.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Through the adoption of CTE standards and quality programming, significant progress is being made within Rhode Island's Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers and high school programs. CTE programs in centers and comprehensive high schools are providing teaching and learning that leads to industry recognized credentials, post secondary credits and opportunities for advanced standing in apprenticeships. The CTE system continues to focus on advancing programs in high demand industries like the culinary arts and marine trades. The state needs to ensure that more CTE offerings align with career pathways identified and supported by GWB and Real Jobs RI Partnerships.

Local school districts could play an important role in providing access to broader career choices by encouraging more high school students to consider and pursue career and technical education opportunities. This is best accomplished through more robust school counseling and programming.

Many school counselors, parents, and students remain unaware of career and technical programs that are available or do not understand their potential value. Most school counselors do not look at employment trends or understand the scope and types of careers available. For example, much of the public perceives manufacturing work as unskilled, dirty factory jobs that are not appealing, when today's advanced manufacturing jobs are actually highly skilled, highly technical, and highly paid.



Apprenticeships and internships can get people up to speed and then small businesses will be able to invest in them.

- GWB Industry Partners Focus Group

We need to change the perception of what technical high school is. They are called Career and Technical programs now. We need to make it sexy! Also, we need to understand that not everyone needs to go to college.

- Large Business Focus Group Participant

Appropriate counseling could encourage students to use this opportunity to explore career and technical programs that they might not otherwise have pursued. RIDE promotes and supports a CTE system that focuses on awareness (grades K-6), exploration (grades 7-9) and preparation (grades 9-14). There is a need to further develop a CTE delivery system embedded in the state's workforce and economic development strategies.

Career and Technical Education integrates academic, technical and skills training, work-based learning, internships and/or apprenticeship experiences. In addition to program based work-based learning, there was agreement among stakeholders that more could be done to give high

school students increased opportunities to receive work experience and exposure to the workforce.

Barriers to the State Education System Effectively Supporting Workforce Development

- Insufficient preparation by K-12 – many students graduate high school lacking basic math and reading skills.
- High schools and parents focus on graduation and college attendance, not job placement.
- Limited coordination between public service delivery partners (higher education, RIDE, local school districts, CTE system).
- Limited relationships between public service delivery partners (higher education, RIDE) and businesses.
- K-12 teachers are not trained to provide students career preparedness.
- Insufficient numbers of career counselors.
- Not enough encouragement of high school students to consider and pursue career and technical education opportunities through more robust career counseling and programming.

Government Leadership and Coordination

Rhode Island's workforce programs and workforce players – both governmental and nongovernmental – are diverse, including multiple state agencies and other government entities, and private sector and non-profit partners.

Although the Governor's Office has taken initiative in redirecting the focus of the state's workforce system, and the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) develops and coordinates policy and programs (in part by working directly with several other workforce players including industry representatives and other state agencies), there is no entity that brings all the pieces and players together and directs the system. The ideas, energy, and to a large part funding are there, but what has been missing is consistent leadership, coordination, and strategic planning that is embraced and implemented by all state players.



There are the makings of a system, but it's not there yet. It requires leadership.

- K-12 Focus Group Participant

How Leadership is Provided to the Workforce System

In less than a year in office, Governor Raimondo has launched two major workforce-related initiatives: **Real Jobs Rhode Island** and **WAVE**. Real Jobs Rhode Island intends to develop Strategic Industry Partnerships (SIPs) that bring together two or more workforce system players, including institutions of higher education, local governments, local workforce boards, regional and local economic development entities, industry associations, labor unions, economic development entities, K-12 programs, philanthropic groups, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and other relevant partners to build alliances to address business workforce demands. Twenty-one Real Jobs planning grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$25,000 were awarded in 11 industries and three regions to identify the training, education, human resource and other solutions to business needs and to develop a detailed workforce training plan. Real Jobs grants to implement the workforce training plans recently have been awarded.

With Real Jobs Rhode Island, Governor Raimondo has taken clear and deliberate steps to begin transforming the state's workforce system from one that primarily focuses on the needs of job seekers, to one that recognizes the important role business plays in workforce development by providing jobs, internships, apprenticeships, and other training opportunities and investments. This new workforce system orientation incorporates strategic planning and directed investments to make the workforce system more responsive to and prepared for the labor needs of business and industry.

However, the Governor's workforce initiatives do not stop there. WAVE is a strategy for economic development investment that focuses on four elements, including workforce development. WAVE's workforce development elements address not only traditional workforce programs such as worker training, but also K-12, higher education, and affordable housing. Specifically, under WAVE, resources will be used for:

- Restructuring the workforce training system to be employer driven and performance based;
- Building education/employer partnerships for grades 9-14 in key sectors; establishing a college loan reimbursement program to keep young, talented students in Rhode Island after they graduate via a program called the Wavemaker Fellowship;
- Sparking the creation of more affordable housing; and
- Creating opportunities for students to pursue college credit or a career after high school through Prepare RI.

The Governor's jobs plan also included additional funding for K-12 schools and affordable housing; a funding plan to raise the state minimum wage from \$9 to \$9.60/hour; the creation of Prepare RI which enables qualifying high school students to take postsecondary courses while in high school at no cost; and college scholarships for low-income students and loan repayment assistance for college graduates who stay in Rhode Island to work in priority fields.

Workforce leadership comes from other quarters as well. For example, in 2014, the General Assembly established the Executive Office of Commerce, which coordinates economic development, business regulation, workforce development, and housing. The Governor's Workforce Board, following the intentions of the Governor's Office and state legislature, provides policy direction for state workforce efforts and allocates some state funding. Established by Executive Order in 2005, the GWB has the statutory responsibility and authority to plan, coordinate, fund, and evaluate workforce development activities in the State. It develops and supports workforce initiatives; collects and reports funding and performance data for all state agency workforce programs; serves as members of the State Workforce Investment Board to oversee federal Workforce Investment Act Title I-B funds; and has responsibility to oversee the investment of state Job Development Funds. Additionally, since 2014, it has been required by statute to develop a strategic state biennial employment and training plan.

There are now more opportunities for employers to provide input, such as industry partnerships and the Governor's Workforce Board.

**- GWB Industry Partnership
Focus Group Participant**

How the State's Workforce System Partners Collaborate & Coordinate

The GWB is the primary mechanism for facilitating collaboration between workforce system players. Its membership includes representatives from DLT, DHS ORS, RIDE, post-secondary education, labor, business, and community organizations. Additionally, the GWB works closely with eight Industry Partnerships that act as liaisons for Rhode Island businesses in key industries (Bioscience, Construction, Defense, Healthcare, Hospitality, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Marine Trades.). The GWB also has working groups, including the Employer Advisory Group, which works to increase private sector input into the public workforce development system. The Employer Advisory Group tries to serve as a bridge between the workforce system and employers in Rhode Island, particularly those that are not part of established communication vehicles such as Industry Partnerships. Feedback from the stakeholder groups was generally favorable regarding the GWB's efforts over the past two years to get industry and business representatives more involved in workforce discussions.

We need all agencies to contribute staff to create a unified workforce system.

- K-12 Focus Group Participant

However, there are several problems with the current system particularly with the GWB as the central agent for collaboration and coordination among state agencies. The first problem is that not all state agencies that should be considered workforce partners actively participate or collaborate with the other workforce players. The only state agency representatives of workforce agency partners required to be on the GWB are the Director of the Department of Labor and Training (which administers it), the Secretary of Commerce, and the Commissioner of Education. Statute also requires one representative of a public institution of higher education in Rhode Island to be included on the Board. Currently, a representative from DHS ORS is also on the Board. However, important state agency workforce partners are missing, including DHS TANF, the Department of Corrections, and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner of Education.

Beyond those acknowledged workforce players, there are agencies and programs that have not historically been considered part of the workforce system but, given their unique roles and responsibilities, should be part of the system. Given the ubiquitousness with which stakeholders named transportation as problem facing the state's workforce, the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) is noticeably absent from workforce discussions. Additionally, the DHS Division of Veterans Affairs should be included as its counselors routinely work with a population that often can have difficulty finding employment.

The second problem with the current system for collaboration and coordination is that no agency, program, or individual seems to have the authority to require all the state agency workforce partners to integrate workforce priorities and policies into their operations and programs. The GWB's governing statute, Rhode Island General Law, Title 42-102, only requires that other state agencies "shall furnish advice and information." As a result, the other agencies understandably focus their resources and attention to their statutory responsibilities.

The Governor's Workforce Board's role should be policy and coordination. All the outside agencies that get workforce money should be coordinated through DLT, but right now they aren't, they all focus on their own agendas. The agencies don't even support the One Stops: the state had to close one last year for lack of funding.

- Local WIB Focus Group Participant

We need leadership to do more statewide. We need a paradigm shift.

- K-12 Focus Group Participant

For some agencies and programs, such as DHS ORS, BHDDH, and the Department of Corrections, their programs include employment services for their targeted populations. However, those workforce services are not really integrated into the larger state workforce program. Programs and agencies without a historic workforce focus, such as DHS TANF, K12 education (with the exception of the Office of Adult Education), and post-secondary education, to varying degrees "touch" the workforce system, but none have policies or programs in place that indicate workforce development is considered a key part of their mission.

This problem comes down to what a few stakeholders bluntly described as a lack of leadership. Since there is no entity that has the authority to require state agency partners to prioritize workforce development, they often do not.

Finally, integrated collaboration and coordination are somewhat challenged due to the existence of two local Workforce Investment Boards. Both local WIBs receive and allocate workforce funding, as well as provide services. While the WIBs work together well and try to coordinate programs, the existence of two WIBs doing the same job in a small state creates confusion and unnecessary bureaucracy. Differences in their programs and operating procedures result in inconsistencies in workforce programs across a small state – and sometimes even across a single office.

For example, each WIB runs on-the-job programs, each with slightly different guidelines, so employers using the programs at different locations can be confused about which standards apply. Another example is the WIBs are responsible for different netWORKri offices, and they have adopted different management strategies: for example, one contracts with DLT to manage its offices while the other uses its own staff. As a result, the netWORKri offices have different job development strategies, as DLT relies on the Business Workforce Center and the local WIB uses in-house job developers – all of whom are trying to network with the same businesses.

Additionally, in Providence, both the Providence-Cranston and statewide WIB serve job seekers out of the same physical netWORKri office. Because each WIB has different policies and programs, staff have to sort job seekers by ZIP code to determine who works with them and for which services they qualify. Job seekers may not notice a difference, but the difference in services available to different job seekers ends up being rather arbitrary. For example, one WIB is now requiring two weeks of soft skill training when people take any other kind of training, whereas the other is not. One WIB refers to its job seekers as “clients” once they meet with job counselors (a reflection of the old social services model from which one stop centers evolved), whereas the other WIB refers to job seekers as “customers” once they walk in the door (a reflection of a more customer-service oriented approach). Having two WIBs with different policies and programs in such a small state contributes to a fragmented, confusing, and inconsistent system.

How the State Brings Together Businesses and Job Seekers

The key elements in the workforce system are employers and workers. The state has multiple programs in place that interact with both of these groups: businesses interface with CommerceRI, GWB Industry Partnerships, DLT’s Business Workforce Center, WIB job developers, and occasionally netWORKri and EmployRI; job seekers interface with netWORKri, EmployRI, and other state workforce agency partners. However, there is no robust system for coordinating these conversations in a meaningful and useful way.

Part of the problem is that the different players speak a different language. Employers do not know how to describe the skills they need, and netWORKri does not sufficiently help people identify their skills. Despite the intention of EmployRI as being a mechanism to bring them

together, it is cumbersome and thus not fully utilized by either job seekers or employers. Another part of the problem is that they just do not speak to each other enough. The job developers who work for the local WIBs and the Business Workforce Center do not coordinate their efforts, so employers report being approached over and over – or not at all.

How Workforce Planning and Decision Making is Conducted

As discussed above, the GWB has primary responsibility for workforce policy development in the state. It uses multiple sources of information to inform its decision making, primarily provided by the DLT. The GWB collects and annually reports data on workforce spending and performance, conducts industry skills gap analyses, assesses long term employment trends in the state using Labor Market Information (LMI), and conducts best practices research. The GWB also relies on reports that may be provided by other state agencies and workforce stakeholders, federal workforce program guidance, and input from its various members and the other members of the workforce community with which it works.

The GWB uses this combined input to establish state workforce priorities that are outlined in the Biennial Employment and Training Plan. In addition to state workforce priorities, the Biennial Plan also includes Action Steps for implementing those priorities. For each priority, the Biennial plan outlines the rationale, identifies stakeholders, assesses the consequences of no action, and anticipates the benefits to customers. Funding considerations also are included.

Although the GWB considers labor market information in its reports and planning, it is not clear how systematically such information influences decision-making. Several stakeholders provided examples of training programs receiving funding that might be scaled back, as well as fields in which there is a high demand for training and a lack of programs (such as community and home health care nurses).

Additionally, acquiring useful data from all state agency workforce partners is challenging. The GWB collects some of this information annually and reports it via the annual Unified Workforce Development Expenditure and Program Report. However, expenditure information is not sufficient for decision-making. When GWB attempted to collect additional data for this CSIP, it ran into significant problems doing so as the state agency partners do not have an agreed upon system for collecting data, measuring performance, or sharing information.

The GWB is not the only state agency to consider workforce in its planning efforts. As noted in Section 1, other agencies and entities, including CommerceRI, the Senate Policy Office, and CCRI have included workforce development in some of their planning documents and strategies. While it is laudable that so many agencies are considering workforce issues in their planning processes, the repetitiveness of the planning efforts and the resulting recommendations also may be another indicator of a system that is neither integrated nor coordinated.

Barriers to Coordinated Service Delivery and Strategic Planning

- Lack of forum where all state workforce agencies participate;
- Lack of participation of RIPTA and Veterans Affairs in the workforce system;
- Lack of workforce system leadership with teeth;
- Lack of prioritization of state workforce priorities by state agency workforce partners;
- Local WIBS with different policies and programs;
- Lack of an efficient and effective tool for job matching;
- Lack of data to inform decision making; and
- Lack of interdepartmental collaboration on decision-making.

Challenges Arising From Workforce Funding Mechanisms

Rhode Island, like all states, relies heavily on federal funding to support workforce programs. As noted in Section 1, two-thirds of the state's workforce funding comes from federal sources. The primary challenge this system of reliance causes is a difficulty in aligning and coordinating programs. Each federal funding stream has different requirements in terms of eligibility, allowable spending, and the reporting of outcomes. As a result, state and community service providers are burdened with complicated, disjointed, and often burdensome grant management and reporting requirements. The varied requirements have historically made it very difficult to provide a coordinated workforce system that incorporates multiple funding streams.

Rhode Island experimented with the integration of funding streams through its Workforce On-Ramps project with funding from the US Department of Labor. Multiple agencies combined programs and strategies. Although an evaluation of this effort is pending, the braiding of funding remains a challenge, as different agencies with different funding streams and requirements work to provide seamless services and report outcomes from their particular funding dollars. This and other efforts to meet employer workforce needs continue to be hampered by the individual reporting requirements of funding from different sources.

An additional challenge stemming from federal funding streams is inherent disincentives in serving the hardest to place. According to the local WIBs, Rhode Island has highest WIA performance standards in New England, but to continue meeting standards, there is a disincentive to serving the hardest to serve. Additionally, federal standards become more stringent over time once they are met, so success is met with more stringent standards, creating even greater disincentives to serve the hardest to place.

Finally, it is not clear that state workforce funds are always used to support state workforce priorities. For example, DLT had to close a netWORKri office – its primary vehicle for serving job seekers – and reduce the hours of another to part time due to lack of funding. It is possible that with funding pooled from other state workforce agency partners, the office could have remained opened.

Barriers to Strategic and Effective Workforce Funding

- Multiple constraints associated with federal funding cause programmatic complexity and burdensome requirements;
- Challenges for agencies to coordinate services in light of siloed federal funding;
- Limits on how federal funding can be spent;
- Disincentives to serve the most difficult to place with federal funds; and
- Lack of coordination between government workforce partners.

Performance Measures

As discussed above, there currently is no consistent way to measure performance or cost effectiveness of workforce programs. In part this is a result of the myriad of federal funding streams and their performance reporting requirements; in part this is because the various state agency workforce partners have not sat down together to develop a set of unified measures. Some Rhode Island workforce performance measures are currently being studied in depth by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, which will be developing recommendation for performance measure standardization and use across state agencies.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

The Workforce Network We Want

An Employer-Driven Network that Meets the Needs of Business and Workers

Our state's workforce development network has the job of readying Rhode Islanders to meaningfully participate in their state's economy, both by making a family-sustaining wage and by finding a place to contribute their unique talents in our community. When we talk about preparing Rhode Islanders to succeed in the labor market we mean a triple win: people win by having a well-paying job; companies win because they have the talent they need to thrive; and our state wins because we all prosper in a strong economy.

The key to coordinating and improving the performance of such a disparate network is to create a common platform on which the various actors that constitute that network can more deliberately and effectively collaborate and thrive. This is no easy task, but if done correctly such a network can ensure:

- **Employers are able to find the workers they need when they need them.** Workforce development should be in service of and responsive to the short- and long-term needs of Rhode Island businesses: the workforce development network must know the hyper-competitive realities of the world economy, and then respond appropriately by making whatever adjustments are necessary to connect workers to jobs and jobs to workers.
- **Workers are able to acquire the skills, training, and support they need to obtain good jobs and careers.** Once employers better articulate their needs, the skills that their work demands, and the job openings that, if filled, can enable their businesses and industries to grow and thrive, the agencies and organizations that help supply workers can respond by partnering and networking to address those needs. These agencies and organizations – public, private, and non-profit – must focus on meeting workers where they are and helping them obtain the skills, training, and supports they need to contribute their talents.
- **Governance is coordinated, adequately and flexibly funded, and accountable.** Government agencies collaborate and cooperate to support employer-driven workforce development by playing a complementary role within our state's distinctive, networked platform. All federal and state funding streams are integrated and aligned to support a demand-driven workforce development system. Performance is measured to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and progress towards goals.

Rhode Island has a number of strategic strengths and assets in this endeavor:

1. The availability of a flexible state-level workforce development fund that can compensate for, and augment, the often restrictive and limited focus of federal funding;
2. The recent investments in industry partnerships, relationship-building, and workforce intelligence gathering by the Governor's Workforce Board;
3. The cooperation among and between state and local workforce boards, along with genuine personal and professional relationships between Rhode Island's workforce and education systems; and
4. The clear engagement and investment by both the Governor and the General Assembly in workforce development as a policy.

However, as the earlier sections of this report demonstrate, Rhode Island's workforce system has not consistently met the needs of the employers or workers of Rhode Island. This is due, in part, to that fact that the myriad of workforce programs and services that have been in place for many years do not (nor have ever) function as a "system," because the term "system" implies a hierarchy, where one entity has the authority to articulate goals and hold a vast array of actors (government agencies, community partners, and others) accountable for progress toward those goals.

To view the disparate workforce programs and services offered in Rhode Island as a system assumes that all involved parties are operating according to a pre-defined set of goals and principles and that they are strategically organized and connected in such a way as to meet those goals and principles. As we have explored in the previous sections, this is not how workforce programming in Rhode Island operates.

Symptoms of this situation can be seen in the challenges and barriers described in the previous section, which are summarized below:

1. Workforce development services are highly fragmented in the absence of a single unified and comprehensive vision;
2. Multiple state and federal workforce programs each have differing rules, regulations, and limitations and are not always the number one priority of their respective administering agency;
3. A widely-held perception is that services are geared toward low to low-medium skilled positions, despite the fact that this is not where employer hiring challenges and, by extension, job opportunities, lie;
4. There is a lack of consistent and dynamic marketing to create and maintain awareness among job seekers and employers of workforce development offerings;

5. Multiple entry points exist for job seekers and employers that increase the risk of customer confusion and detachment;
6. Demand continues to increase for adult education and English language training and services;
7. A lack of robust connections to K-12 and higher education systems

In this section, we propose a series of solutions and strategies that seek to overcome these challenges. We begin with the fundamental understanding that workforce development does not operate as a 'system' but is rather a broad '*network*' of various actors that must find a way to collaborate effectively for the outcomes we need and desire to be achieved. Therefore, the realities of the state's workforce efforts are better understood if we explicitly switch to the conceptual vocabulary of "networked government."

As Donald Kettl writes in the Brookings Institution's THE KEY TO NETWORKED GOVERNMENT:⁷

Networked government, in fact, is something like the networked brain. Many of the brain's basic functions are hard-wired. Neural networks adapt to new stimuli, and new patterns of interconnection emerge as needed to help the brain solve fresh problems. The brain's learning is adaptive behavior. Government's networks likewise have learned to adapt to fit and solve the shifting patterns and growing expectations of public policy. Networked government has emerged as a strategy to help government adapt and perform in the changing policy world.

What exactly is networked government? It represents the interaction of numerous actors, both within and outside the government, working together to achieve an objective. As Kettl puts it, "Some networks connect government and the private and nonprofit sectors. Some are between government agencies at a single level of government, while others are within government but across its levels. Some stretch across international boundaries and, like the international space station, past the boundaries of earth itself. These networks are all pragmatic efforts to adapt existing organizations, through practical partnerships, to pursue public purposes."

In previous sections of this report, numerous deficiencies and disconnects in the existing workforce network were identified. Such breakdowns degrade our capacity, and these tears must be repaired if we are going to build a network that serves Rhode Island well.

Simply finding and identifying pain points is a necessary but insufficient step to improvement. It is naïve of us to believe that by finding a weakness we have the requisite actionable intelligence

⁷ Kettl, The Key to Networked Government, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/press/books/2009/unlockingthepowerofnetworks/unlockingthepowerofnetworks_chapter.pdf

to prudently and efficiently solve all our problems at once. Naiveté along these line leads to irresponsible pseudo-solutions when we have neither clear ideas of the specific problems to which our remedies are solutions, nor distinct notions of when we will have achieved our objectives.

However, with the right vision and ‘endgame’ unifying our collective efforts, we can begin to reverse engineer solutions and discover a host of impediments that can be solved by changes in practices, procedures and, in some instances, in our laws themselves. Attempting to find and solve such impediments on a macro “system” level is inefficient because:

1. As we’ve already described, there is no workforce development ‘system’ in Rhode Island, but rather a collective ‘network’ of actors that lack an organizing principle; and
2. The most effective organizing principle available, the needs of Rhode Island’s leading industry clusters, does not lend itself to the discovery of ‘system wide’ dysfunctions and solutions, but rather clustered, industry-specific issues that, when overcome, benefit not only employers in that cluster, but job seekers seeking employment in that cluster, and, writ large, all job seekers.

As workforce challenges are identified and solutions developed through the network are developed, performance measurement becomes a critical component of understanding how the network functions and if developed solutions are successful. Robust data collection and analysis is needed to articulate the demand of industry sectors, identify challenges facing both employers and job seekers, and document the effect of a specific intervention. Effective performance measurement allows individual actors to demonstrate the effectiveness of a specific intervention on a micro level while capturing the network’s collective effect on macro level challenges.

Real Jobs RI – An Example of Networked Government

While many states including Rhode Island have piloted “sector strategies” to aggregate the demand of employers and while almost all the academic literature available on these strategies shows that they are a more than promising best practice, no state has tried to bring this best practice to scale. We intend to do so.

Like all states, Rhode Island has an economy that is unique because it is the sum total of the output of all Rhode Island’s enterprises. When our economy, is thriving more wealth and more jobs are created. As John F. Kennedy said: “A rising tide lifts all boats.”

While all of our state’s enterprises are equally valuable, they are not all equal in terms of the role they play in economic growth. In Rhode Island there are a number of economic clusters that drive and determine the health of the rest of the economy; sectors that, if healthy, can float

all boats. A recent Brookings/Deloitte/Battelle analysis done for Rhode Island's Executive Office of Commerce has identified seven such clusters:

1. Biomedical Innovation
2. Cyber and Data Analytics
3. Maritime
4. Advanced Business Service
5. Design, Materials and Custom Manufacturing
6. Transport, Distribution and Logistics
7. Arts, Education and Tourism

In order to raise the tide for all, the priority for the investment of both money and effort must be to align with these industry clusters through networked government solutions. For example, DLT's Real Jobs Rhode Island program seeks to invest in specific workforce training plans designed by industry cluster partnerships. Of course an "industry cluster" in, for instance, maritime goes beyond companies that make boats to include supply chains, logical support and business service systems. When we understand these clusters properly much of the state's business activity finds connection in them.

If our workforce development network is functioning well, the companies in our state's most vibrant quarters will be able to find the workers they need efficiently. If our state's key industries can more quickly and more predictably find the trained workforce they need because of the prowess of our workforce network, then our workforce network is both a significant competitive advantage for our state's enterprises and a powerful tool to attract new firms. Because our state's companies will be more healthy, they will have an advantage when they are ready to risk expansion, and because new companies will be more likely to come to Rhode in search of our workforce, there will be more opportunities to Rhode Island workers to participate in the success of their communities, and thrive themselves.

The Real Jobs RI program convenes actors in the workforce network to collaborate on solutions for strategically identified industry demands. Real Jobs RI strives to be what Director of Family and Economic Success at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and workforce development theorist Robert Giloth calls "the most ambitious form" of sectoral partnerships:

In their most ambitious form, sectoral partnerships go beyond industry targeting to organizing and connecting supply and demand elements for a cluster of firms...Sectorial partnerships represent an important type of workforce intermediary, and indeed the deep knowledge of the economy that characterizes sectoral projects is also a defining characteristic of the best of workforce intermediaries. At some point, these business, union, community, and public sector relationships create the civic capacity to advocate for

*pieces of multiple workforce funding streams, credentialing and standards, and resources priorities. These sectoral partnerships frequently establish linkages to economic development initiatives that focus on business monetization, venture capital, job creation, and improving job quality.*⁸

Real Jobs RI seeks to grow sectoral workforce intermediaries in the strategic industry clusters as defined by the Executive Office of Commerce. The initiative will group employers, large and small, within those clusters and invites them to identify common workforce challenges. Linked by a lead convener, the partnerships identify the challenge, propose the solution, and gather the necessary partners (such as community service providers, trainers, colleges, universities, or public workforce agencies) to make that solution a reality. It will then benchmark the workforce demand that employers within these clusters have, and measure the capacities of the Real Jobs RI funded intermediaries to meet that demand. In seamless coordination with other state agencies, the program will track what Giloth refer to above as “civic capacity.”

As industry-specific ‘pain points’ are brought to the surface by Real Jobs RI industry partnerships, or other intermediaries, they are reported to, and extensively documented by the specific advisor and government staff assigned to that partnership. These advisors share the identified barrier or issue with the Director of the Department of Labor and Training who will either: 1) Respond/react to any matters within the purview of the Department of Labor and Training; 2) Share any matters within the purview of other state agencies with said agencies, with a mutually-agreed upon follow-up date; or 3) Bring any matter that lies outside or above the purview of state agencies (such as a statutory change) to the Governor and General Assembly. It is critical that all aspects of this resolution process be documented and tracked, and the Real Jobs program intends to do so as part of its larger performance evaluation.

This means rigorously tracking the sector plans of Real Jobs Partnerships, and working with the Executive Office of Commerce (in close conjunction with their Brookings/Deloite efforts), the intermediaries and companies of Rhode Island’s “economic clusters”, and Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government to develop benchmarks to judge whether our efforts are successfully meeting the demand for workers our economy is generating.

This is an iterative effort, but we will have our first dashboards reflecting the performance of individual Real Jobs RI training plans posted on the DLT website by April, and will have finalized our sector benchmarks by January of 2017.

⁸ Giloth, Robert. “Introduction: A Case for Workforce Intermediaries” in *Workforce Intermediaries for the Twenty-First Century* ed. Robert Giloth. (Temple University Press, Philadelphia: 2004) p. 23.

Applying networked government solutions

With the right structure and execution, the networked approach to workforce development offers a strategy to address or overcome each of the afore-mentioned challenges currently confronting the state's collective workforce efforts. This strategy uses the strengths and collaboration of individual entities operating within the network to develop solutions to challenges in the context in which those challenges arise. Such contextualized solutions have the benefit of alleviating a specific pain point within the network without needing to wait for comprehensive policy reform to take place. Once a pattern of solutions or a theme around certain challenges emerges, then the experience gained from solving micro challenges can be used to inform more comprehensive policy changes.

The following broad areas should receive initial prioritization, as pain points in these areas represent some of the greatest challenges outlined by this report:

1. Partnerships between government agencies,
2. Connections between labor supply and demand, and
3. Public funding for workforce development

In this plan we will briefly lay out projects under each area; their objectives, and their time frames. It is our belief that in the course of pursuing the work below we will make demonstrable progress on a number of the deficiencies articulated in previous sections. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation process, currently underway as required by the 2014 passage of WIOA, will be used to further develop and implement the following activities.

Partnerships between government agencies

Government agencies have key roles within the workforce development network, from developing policy to funding activities. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the network connections between government agencies are maximized and able to support network solutions involving non-government agencies. There are two main projects to pursue in the context of improving partnerships between government agencies: strengthen internal structures within agencies to better support interagency collaboration, and create capacity within agencies to support interagency problem solving as part of daily operations.

The Department of Labor and Training provides an example of the need to strengthen internal structures within an agency. The department has three workforce divisions – the Governor's Workforce Board, the State Workforce Investment Office, and Division of Workforce Development Services. The three divisions separately oversee the spending of workforce funds, both state and federal, in addition to issuing policy and guidance around programs supported by

those funds. By reorganizing these divisions to increase efficiency and to consolidate the management of funding and activities, the department will be better positioned to collaborate with other agencies and external partners. As a result, challenges such as fragmented services, differing program rules, and multiple points of entrance and exit for job seekers can be minimized among the DLT programs, improving the Department's ability to contribute to solutions to these challenges on a larger scale. This reorganization will take place by February 2016.

As agencies improve their internal supports for interagency collaboration, each agency must take steps to ensure the capacity to work with other agencies on a regular basis exists. Networked government allows problems found under specific circumstances to be articulated to key staff within an agency. Each agency must create clear procedures for evaluating those problems identified and determining if other agencies must be involved in developing the solution. Clear points of contacts should be developed to provide consistent interagency communication and to provide a clear method for follow up.

An example of how networked government can facilitate problem solving can be seen through the recent example of providing a local school with used manufacturing equipment to expand school-based training in CNC Machining. The proposal of a local manufacturing company to sell used equipment to the local school that had a CTE program designed to provide students manufacturing training seemed to be straightforward idea that served both the needs of the school and the employer. However, as the request moved through the procurement process at the local and state level the response to the school became a purchase document for buying new equipment, which would eliminate the employer relationship and limit the number of machines the school could purchase. However through networked government, the employer intermediary for the manufacturers brought this problem to the Department of Labor and Training. The department in turn facilitated a meeting with the purchasing agencies and the local school. As a result the issue was resolved and the original proposal is currently progressing. Through this approach an immediate need was resolved and the agencies involved gained insight around how internal procedures could be amended to prevent similar situations from occurring.

WIOA implementation has provided a formalized process to increase interagency collaboration. The Departments of Education, Human Services, and Labor and Training have all identified a single point of contact as the WIOA lead for the respective agency. This point person is responsible for coordinating WIOA efforts internally within their agency as well as working with the other WIOA leads to facilitate interagency planning and develop the WIOA state plan. The WIOA leads and team structures should remain in place after the WIOA plan is submitted to continue the interagency cooperation and oversee the implementation of projects included in the state plan.

Connections between labor supply and demand

Connecting employer demand to the supply of available workers in the state is the core challenge of each workforce development program. These connections take place every day in numerous ways. In some cases little to no intervention is needed and employers connect to job seekers directly. However, as demonstrated by the persistent labor shortages across all industries, the direct employer connection to a job seeker is not sufficient in meeting the workforce needs of employers throughout the economy. Employers rely on other actors in the workforce network to identify, and in some cases train, the individuals needed to fill vacant or new positions.

Just as employers alone are unable to make all the job seeker connections necessary to meet their needs, no actor in the network can expect to have all the connections necessary to connect employers and job seekers while ensuring all the needs of each group are met. Therefore, it is important for each actor, large and small, to determine what strengths they lend to the network and what purpose they want to serve. Actors then make connections with each other to provide more comprehensive interventions that lead people to employment opportunities. Rather than chase the white whale of system alignment, network actors should concentrate on expanding services and connections that demonstrate success and shed those program that are unable to do so.

In addition to addressing the impossible amount of capacity needed in the system-based approach to workforce development, the network-based approach provides the additional benefits of capitalizing on the strengths of individual organizations and responding to the almost limitless number of ways individual citizens interact with the workforce network. There are no simple paths or aligned services that take individuals to their career goals, this is due to the fact each person is unique and enters the system with their own combination of experience, education, personality, personal circumstances, goals, and needs.

The concept of “no wrong door” can be expanded in the networked government approach. No wrong door acknowledges individuals connect to the network in different ways and that those first connections are often not the only services needed by the individual. Networked government allows those entities that represent first contacts to build relationships with other entities in an effort to help the individual make subsequent connections. Rather than consolidate programs and try to reduce them to an ordered, sequential set of steps that an individual would follow like a technical manual, entities providing services should partner around common themes to create more effective connections around shared topics. Formal partnerships should emerge from this process and more comprehensive solutions that combine the strength of all engaged entities can be developed. While government agencies can help support the convening of these partnerships, this approach requires substantial engagement by all entities. Two major projects to begin this effort are as follows:

Reimagine Rhode Island's One Stops

'One Stop Career Centers' are intended to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers under one roof. Established under the Workforce Investment Act, the One Stops offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services. However these centers have been given the unfair burden of being expected to provide a substantial portion of the services a job seeker needs. The centers, ill-equipped to handle such tasks, are often criticized for not doing enough for customers, not meeting the needs of employers, and not performing as well as other workforce initiatives funded by public money. With such unrealistic expectations placed upon the One Stop, the staff have been unable to focus on their greatest strength, career counseling, due to the need to attempt to make all network connections themselves.

The newly passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) does recognize this fact, and allows Rhode Island the opportunity and flexibility to let its One Stops play a vital role that is natural for them within the fabric of our state's workforce development network. This means our One Stops will no longer be forced to behave as if they actually were themselves, the monolith workforce network in total. Because Real Jobs RI intermediaries will have the job of working with the demand end of the market, our One Stops gain the latitude to reimagine the role they play in our state specific and unique network.

This reimagined role for the One Stop should be that of a network connections facilitator. By spending the appropriate amount of time with job seekers, rather than attempting to be the entire network for an individual, the One Stop can help connect job seekers to the services or industry partnership based on the job seeker's specific needs. It will be up to the partnering entities to actually provide the services and help the individual make subsequent connections.

However, it is important to note that the reimagined role of the One Stop does not affect the collocating services in the same physical space if greater efficiency is achieved. Some services require job seeker actions, such as completing an applications or submitting documentation, and can be colocated to help minimize an individual's need to travel to multiple government offices. Services such as Unemployment Insurance and TANF are already colocated in the One Stop.

Using the WIOA implementation process, Rhode Island can reimagine the One Stops in Rhode Island through an inclusive stakeholder process that brings together the voices of those who use DLT's services to inform the improvements.

Also in line with the philosophy of Governor Raimondo's executive order on lean government, our front line, unionized workers will be an important voice in these deliberations. No one knows the pain-points of our community better than those who have been in the frontline serving

Rhode Islanders. And we need more folks helping people in the One Stops not less, so “lean does not mean mean”. We are looking to start an earnest discussion about what our own state employees believe will help them help their clients better.

An important part of reimagining the One Stops is retooling EmployRI, Rhode Island’s workforce IT platform and job bank. In the coming year, Rhode Island is slated to re-bid the contract for this system. We will use the process above to inform the scope of work for this crucial procurement so that we get an IT system that works to collect the data needed by state and local staff, job seekers, service providers, and employers to make informed workforce development decisions. One key component will be the management of the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List, which will become, as a result of WIOA implementation, a more useable and accurate list to catalogue training opportunities and provide performance data on training providers to the public.

Accompanying the development of this web based repository will be a network wide initiative focused on training career coaches, case managers, and guidance counselors on how to navigate the workforce development network (including the information contained in the training repository), aligning coaching with industry needs, and providing clearer and more refined guidance for job seekers. Career coaching plays a crucial role in all corners of the workforce development network.

Stakeholder meetings on these efforts will start in January of 2016 and an initial plan for what our state’s One Stop system will become will be included in the WIOA Implementation Plan due to the US DOL in March of 2016.

Tap a Workforce of Diverse Abilities

As the need to aggregate and understand the demands of employers has been emphasized throughout this report, the need to understand and meet the needs of individuals is no less important. Ensuring Rhode Island’s entire workforce is engaged in the economy is not only the basis for good social policy, it is also the foundation of smart economic policy. We simply cannot afford to leave the talents of any Rhode Islander untapped especially as the economy begins to recover from the great recession.

Ensuring all of Rhode Island’s workforce is engaged in the economy requires aggressive planning and performance measurement. As discussed earlier, no network entity can shoulder the needs of all individuals around a specific topic. As a result, numerous entities will be serving the same population in a similar or complementary way. Aggressive planning must take place to create partnerships among the entities to share intelligence around the population being served and the effectiveness of the interventions offered.

Performance measurement can be used to establish common goals for meeting a population's needs and as a method to collect the data necessary to determine what services have been provided and if those services were effective. In addition, information can be collected around the subsequent connections made by the individual during and after the service was provided. Measuring the performance of service providers will provide meaningful data funding entities in the network can use to improve the strategic impact of the money spent to support workforce activities. The partnership and performance measurement framework discussed here will mirror the efforts to build the same capacity for demand related entities. By formalizing partnership connections in the network and requiring programs to collaborate rather than consolidate, it will become clearer how to connect the labor supply of Rhode Island to the workforce demands of employer. Two recommendations can jumpstart this process:

First, embed service providing entities into Real Jobs RI partnerships and other demand-based programs. While all Real Jobs RI partnerships include non-employer partners, the need to include additional partners will grow. Real Jobs RI is a grant program designed to support and foster the growth of industry partnerships that can aggregate the needs of employers and then work with other partners to find the individuals needed to meet this demand. Partnerships are expected to grow and evolve to identify workforce needs beyond those of the initial funding phase and to attract additional partners to solve common problems.

Just as service providers find it frustrating to respond to employer demand in the absence of an industry-wide forum, so too can employer partnerships feel overwhelmed when trying to recruit individuals from the numerous entities within the network representing individual job seekers. Therefore, service providers should also establish formal partnerships to create a common conversation and access points for engaging demand related entities. The strength of this partnership model for all network entities is that strong connections help facilitate even more connections which in turn strengthen the overall effectiveness of the partnership.

Some of the first Real Jobs RI partnerships are already focusing on developing these stronger connections to serve Rhode Islanders with specific characteristics. For example, the regional group partnerships are focusing on recruiting long term unemployed individuals from their local communities where unemployment is especially virulent and resistant to improvement. In addition, work is underway to create a Real Jobs RI partnership that connects companies with a demand for a workforce of diverse abilities to the network of Rhode Island organizations that can help those companies find talented workers who have developmental challenges. Such a partnership will help continue the work begun under a federal grant to help ready disabled workers to succeed in the workforce and will also support statewide efforts to implement the corrective actions contained in a US Department of Justice consent decree. These partnerships will be providing training by July 2016 and other partnerships will be designing their recruitment models through the spring of 2016.

As these models develop stronger relationships with entities representing the labor force will also develop, giving service providers the direct connection with demand related entities they have been seeking and creating the opportunity for employers to discuss specific skill development with the service providers in the context of the training plan developed under the Real Jobs RI grant. Improved contextual collaboration will help both groups to create more effective interventions and connect individuals to employment opportunities on a consistent basis with measurable results.

The second recommendation is to augment the capacity of the One Stops. As previously discussed, One Stops cannot represent the workforce network in and of themselves. To help achieve the reimagining of the One Stops, programs such as Platform to Employment, Skills for Rhode Island's Future, the Rhode Island Jobs Club, and a behind-the-walls One Stop office should be implemented by July 2016. Such programs would help fill the need to connect more individuals to employment opportunities and help additional individuals access the workforce development network. Each program provides a different methodology for achieving this goal, and a unique level of expertise that reflects and benefits the unique populations they serve, but each will complement the work of the other while supporting the One Stops.

Long-Term Unemployed

Platform to Employment: Although the United States is now several years removed from the 'Great Recession,' there are still millions of Americans (and thousands of Rhode Islanders) that have been out of work for six months or more. These long-term unemployed are trapped in a vicious cycle as their lengthy unemployment itself becomes a barrier to new employment. Platform to Employment (P2E) is a nationally recognized solution to this problem. The foundation of P2E is a five-week preparatory program for job seekers which includes skills assessments, career readiness workshops, employee assistance programs and more. Career coaches work with participants to leverage their professional experience and to develop effective job search strategies. Upon completion, P2E helps participants find open positions at local companies and offers an eight-week, paid work experience. For job seekers: P2E creates a real pathway back to employment. For employers: P2E offers businesses a risk-free opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring participants.

Job Club RI: A national program like P2E is most effective when paired with a talented local partner. Job Club RI is a program that has received national attention for the intensive support and attention it provides in building up the long-term unemployed personally and professionally. Job Club RI focuses particularly on helping mid-career, formerly middle-wage professionals return to similar employment. This a population that is rarely served by the public system, but who have suffered greatly during the recession - many experiencing catastrophic downward financial mobility as they struggle to match, or come close to matching, their prior earnings. Job Club RI operates on a six-week job club cycle structured to include step by step approach to

successful job hunting along with group support. Each week major job searching strategies are reviewed and discussed including but not limited to resume writing, cover letters, interviewing, the 'hidden' job market, current labor trends, informational interviewing, networking, and job development. Job Club RI also provided individual counseling with ongoing group support focusing on dignity, respect, value and self-worth. Lastly, Job Club provides a growing bank of major employers who regularly contribute job leads, support and encouragement to Job Club participants.

Traditionally Underserved Populations

Skills for Rhode Island's Futures: "Skills for Chicagoland's Future (SCF)" is a public-private partnership working to match businesses that have current, unmet hiring needs with qualified, unemployed or underemployed job seekers, often from traditionally underserved backgrounds. Such individuals often lack a clear and recognized venue through which they can connect to, and demonstrate value to, employers. SCF will be bringing its expert matching and recruiting skills to Rhode Island as "Skills for Rhode Island's Future" (SRIF). SRIF will serve as a demand-driven intermediary providing a professional talent acquisition resource for businesses while finding talent in places that are often overlooked.

Department of Corrections One Stop: A 'One Stop behind the walls' will bring the range of services, knowledge, data, and expertise that is made available to the general public through the state One Stop centers and bring it into the Corrections system, providing soon-to-be-released offenders or recently released ex-offenders with contextualized targeted and intensive job matching and training services. Ex-offenders have a range of additional hurdles and challenges that must be overcome to secure employment; yet quality employment is essential to reducing recidivism and keeping ex-offenders from returning to prison.

Real Jobs RI Disability Partnership: While most Real Jobs RI Partnerships take form around the workforce needs of specific industries, others can start with meeting the needs of specific populations, and building training solutions that meet the unique needs of those job seekers and are customized to the needs of businesses. Rhode Island has a great deal of untapped talent within the disabled community; and there are a number of different programs and agencies that are focused on helping disabled individuals secure employment, but these programs lack alignment. The Real Jobs RI program will work with these partners to build a demand-driven contextualized partnership built exclusively for disabled workers. This partnership will receive workforce intelligence directly from companies as well as other Real Jobs RI partnerships and build on-demand training solutions. In addition to delivering training talent, the Partnership can ensure that both the employer and the job seeker receive every incentive, benefit, and assistance they may be eligible for.

Public funding for workforce development

Determining the most effective way to make workforce development investments to maximize the results achieved for the dollars spent remains one of the greatest challenges facing the workforce development network. Investment for workforce development comes from government, non-profit, for-profit, and private sources. The goal of the network is to use all money in the most effective and efficient way possible.

However, as discussed, the range of funding streams, especially state and federal funds, each have differing rules, regulations, and limitations regarding their intended use. Government agencies and related stakeholders have struggled for decades to use multiple funding streams to share costs associated with activities of common interest. Typically in these situations the need to account for each dollar spent back to the purpose for each dollar allocated can make it difficult to share costs or to blend funding in a useable way. Many of the complaints around the fragmentation seen among workforce programs stem from the inability to jointly fund activities in a comprehensive way. Such issues cannot be resolved at the state level alone because federal funding represents the largest portion of investment.

Rather than continue to call for financial policy reform that seeks to blend funding, it is recommended the state work with its federal project officers to develop financial plans that function within the current policy and procedures to use multiple funding sources to achieve a common goal and maintain the accounting necessary to trace each dollar back to its funding source and purpose.

Plans for leveraging funding to support activity must be determined based on the specifics of the activity details, purpose, and anticipated participants. Due to the need for activity detail, large scale policies on braiding funds will be ineffective without the information gathered from attempting to use multiple funding sources within the context of specific projects. However, while policy around the mechanics of braiding funding should not be pursued first, clear direction by leaders should be given across all government funding streams detailing the vision of expectations that agencies should align to when making funding decisions. By providing direction on how priorities in separate agencies align with a statewide vision, agencies can work with partnerships of all types across the network to develop the best financial package to support an activity or group of participants. In the same way college students each have individual financial aid packages to attend the same institution, so too will individual activities be funded in unique ways to maximize investment.

The WIOA state plan that will be submitted to US DOL in March 2016 will contain the statewide direction and vision for workforce development. In addition this plan will include specific priorities that will be accomplished over the course of the four year plan. Part of achieving these priorities will be the use of multiple funding streams to pay for activities under these larger

priorities. Once the plan is in place, specific policy guidance will be issued to facilitate the process. As those policies are implemented and activity begins, stakeholders will continue to be convened to vet the policies and make additional recommendations for their improvement. This vetting process is scheduled to begin July 2016. It is important to note at this point that the WIOA state plan is expected to be amended and changed to maintain the relevance of the plan by refining the priorities and direction provided as plan elements are accomplished.

Acquired intelligence around the use of funding and the activities supported by that funding will not only give network entities, including state agencies, better information to use when developing multiple funding source solutions, but can also be used to support larger policy reform. Only by analyzing information on what funding solutions were effective and understanding those that failed to achieve results, can leaders both at the state and federal level make informed decisions around the legislative intent and allocation of funds. Maintaining open communication with federal project officers throughout this process will be critical, not only for direction around spending funds appropriately, but for sharing our efforts at a national level.

ACTION ITEMS

| Recommendation | First Step Action Items | Responsible Entity | Estimated Competition Date |
|--|--|---|--|
| Partnerships Between Government Agencies | | | |
| A. Develop common measures and definitions | A. Create broad performance measures that incorporate program specific measures and can be used to illustrate trends in workforce development as related to the economic trends of industry B. For those required programs at the one stop create a definition of eligibility hierarchy to assist frontline staff assist individuals navigate programs for which they are eligible | GWB & OMB DLT | January 2017 January 2017 |
| B. Establish common information around individuals and service providers | A. Select a common skills and education assessment that all required programs at the one stop will use to assess an individual B. Create a common profile for individuals that can be used by all required programs and community provider to track the assessments and services provided to an individual C. Create a standard training provider list or list series for all required programs to use when referring individuals to training. As part of this project, standardize the criteria used to place a provider on the list. | GWB | July 2016 |
| C. Set up mechanisms to improve coordination at the agency level | A. Establish high level coordination to hold agencies accountable for achieving statewide goals through collaboration B. Create capacity within agencies to support inter-agency problem solving C. Create procedures that support information sharing among frontline staff in separate agencies D. Officially state the roles of agencies involved in workforce development and the expectations each agency regarding the achievement of statewide workforce goals | A. Governor's Office B. DLT, DHS, RIDE C. GWB D. Governor's Office | A. On-going B. July 2016 C. January 2017 D. July 2016 |
| D. Further strengthen the | A. Designate a regional planning area that includes both local areas in the WIOA | GWB | March 2016 |

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| relationship of the two local workforce areas | state plan to help coordinate policy work and formally support the existing collaboration of both local areas | | |
| E. Establish a mechanism for policy reform based on the experience of employers and job seekers | A. Create procedures to collect on-going feedback from employers and job seekers B. Create procedures for agencies to present policy issues and recommendations to the GWB | GWB | January 2017 |
| F. Consolidate Planning Efforts | A. Use the WIOA state plan to articulate the state vision for the workforce development network and ensure other required plans that contain workforce related components align to the vision established in the WIOA plan. B. Re-purpose other workforce plans to track progress toward meeting the statewide vision established in the WIOA plan | Governor's Office GWB | January 2018 |
| G. Improve referral processes between programs | A. Improve the quality of referrals to Network RI offices by providing individuals more information about the services of the Network RI offices B. Establish procedures for ensuring that clients act upon agency referrals to other services | DLT, DHS, RIDE | July 2017 |
| Connections Between Labor Supply and Demand | | | |
| A. Expand demand driven workforce development strategies using Real Jobs Rhode Island | A. Continue to provide technical assistance to Real Jobs Rhode Island grantees to help partnerships implement their training plans B. Assist partnerships in connecting with other employers and service providers C. Continue to fund new training modules proposed by partnerships to meet new or expanding employer needs. | GWB/DLT | On going |
| B. Reform the one stop centers | A. Hold stakeholder meetings to generate recommendations to be included in the WIOA state plan B. Conduct LEAN – Kaizen Events at Network RI centers to improve processes and customer service C. Implement programs to augment one stop services, including Platform to Employment, Skills for Rhode Island's Future, and the RI Jobs Club | DLT | A. January 2016 B. January 2016 C. July 2016 |

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| <p>C. Improve the functions and usability of the EmployRI system</p> | <p>A. Aggregate feedback provided through the stakeholder process for this report and for WIOA planning to determine the contract elements that must be modified to deliver a more effective data management system</p> <p>B. Include these modified elements in the new contract to be negotiated by DLT with the system provider</p> <p>C. Create a statewide IT plan for migrating all core workforce partner agencies onto a common data management system or for developing automatic data sharing connections between systems that must remain separate.</p> | <p>GWB/DLT</p> <p>DLT/GWB/other partner agencies</p> | <p>January 2017</p> <p>January 2018</p> |
| <p>D. Leverage demand driven strategies to connect populations with specific barriers to employment opportunities</p> | <p>A. Increase Real Jobs Rhode Island support for businesses that have employment opportunities for individuals with specific barriers to employment</p> <p>B. Leverage Real Jobs Rhode Island partnerships to provide training and employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities in accordance with the U.S. Department of Justice Consent Order</p> | <p>A. DLT/GWB</p> <p>B. DLT/GWB/BHDDH</p> | <p>July 2016; then on going</p> |
| <p>E. Create clearer access points for small businesses and individual firms to connect and participate in the workforce network</p> | <p>A. Add language to the DLT website to clarify all services are available for any size employer, including small businesses</p> <p>B. Create informational materials for the small business audience</p> <p>C. Develop a strategy to engage small businesses in economic and workforce development initiatives</p> | <p>GWB/DLT CommerceRI</p> | <p>July 2016</p> |
| <p>F. Strengthen connections between youth-serving organizations (in-school and out-of-school) and RI businesses</p> | <p>A. Engage businesses in curriculum development, career exploration, and work-based learning</p> <p>B. Expand internships, pre-apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities for youth</p> | <p>GWB, Local WIBs, DCYF, BHDDH, DOC, DHS, RIDE</p> | <p>On going</p> |
| <p>G. Inventory and evaluate credentials and their value to employers and academic institutions</p> | <p>A. Create an inventory of existing credentials attained through current program offerings</p> <p>B. Determine the audience(s) for each credential – employer, academic institution, service provider, etc.</p> <p>C. Determine if the credential has been vetted by the intended audience and if so,</p> | <p>GWB</p> | <p>January 2018</p> |

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| | <p>the value assigned to the credential by the audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate industry recognized credentials through the Real Job Rhode Island partnership • For credentials not valued by the intended audience, determine if credentials do not serve their intended purpose or if the intended audience is unaware of the credentials' purpose | | |
| H. Dispel myths and stereotypes around the services provided through the workforce network | <p>A. Provide guidance for determining the effect of earned wages on the level of public benefits individuals are eligible to receive</p> <p>B. Provide training to one stop staff on having conversations with job seekers about the effect potential employment will have on their eligibility for various benefits</p> <p>C. Highlight the work of the workforce network around meeting employer needs for middle skill and high skill labor, particularly around the work of Real Jobs Rhode Island partnerships</p> | <p>A & B: Each agency responsible for dispersing a benefit</p> <p>C. GWB</p> | <p>January 2017</p> <p>On going</p> |
| Public Funding for Workforce Development | | | |
| A. Determine if existing programs are meeting the needs of those needing services | <p>A. Conduct a detailed analysis of programs identified during the development of this report to determine the cause of waiting lists for some service providers and underutilization of others</p> <p>B. Determine as part of the detailed analysis if the investments currently made are the most effective</p> | GWB and inter-agency committee | January 2018 |
| B. Leverage multiple funding streams to achieve common workforce development goals | <p>A. Determine the cost allocation of operating the one stops for the core partners during the WIOA implementation process</p> <p>B. Prioritize projects to begin leveraging multiple funding streams among WIOA core partners and create financial plans to support those projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with the Real Jobs Rhode Island grants and the individuals who will receive training through the training plans developed by the Real Jobs Rhode Island partnerships | DLT/RIDE/DHS | January 2017 |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agencies will be responsible for determining which funds will support each activity and individual within a priority project and tracking the funding per federal and state requirements placed on each funding stream <p>C. Establish or maintain open communication with federal project officers to receive approval of project based financial plans before plans are implemented to ensure the plan complies with all federal requirements of each funding stream</p> | | |
| <p>C. Correct procedures that may cause delay in payment to service or training providers</p> | <p>A. Create policies within agencies to provide directions to funding recipients for notifying the agency of a late payment and to provide agency staff with direction on how to review such notices</p> <p>B. Provide additional technical assistance to funding recipients to improve the collection and organization of information needed from a recipient to initiate payment from an agency</p> | <p>Each agency responsible for disbursing funds</p> | <p>July 2016</p> |

APPENDIX A – STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

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