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## The Mandate for Change

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On September 22, 2005, Governor Donald L. Carcieri signed Executive Order 05-18 effectively creating the Governor's Workforce Board and setting the stage for needed workforce reform. In an effort to streamline the board's authority, the Executive Order also aligned historic state legislation that created the Human Resource Investment Council. Chapter 42-102-9(a), states in part, "The council shall establish statewide policies, goals, and guidelines for the coordination of all employment and training programs and related services, and employment-related training programs within the state...."



Consistent with the mandate of the Executive Order to create a statewide workforce development plan, the combined vision of the Governor and General Assembly clearly articulates the board's role and authority in these matters. As Rhode Island's advisory body to the Governor regarding the state's federal and state workforce development programs and related system issues, the board is the ideal vehicle to promulgate, implement and evaluate the progress of reforms needed to address the state's challenges as it embraces the new economy.

Several key state agencies, and a number of community, faith-based and philanthropic organizations, count workforce development and related services among their mission. While there have been numerous and sometimes successful efforts to collaborate, too often siloed funding streams and bureaucratic processes have impeded the best of well-intentioned motives. With declining resources to support workforce development efforts in their current form, a renewed system model based on strong partnerships is essential.

The legislated mandate of the Governor's Workforce Board is to provide strategic direction for the workforce system through a comprehensive State Workforce Plan that provides a common vision and statewide goals and objectives. The board has formulated a plan that defines the goals and aligns both the strategies and resources through which all Rhode Island agencies, educational institutions, communities and employers can contribute. Partnerships and collaboration among these entities is critical to success in both the short and long term. Finally, the board is creating an ongoing evaluation system that transcends individual programs and funding streams to measure effectively whether these strategies have the desired impacts on the state's workforce challenges.





## Executive Summary

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*In every era, in every generation, Rhode Islanders have matched their ingenuity to a changing world and done whatever was necessary to prosper. History is testing us again. Do not mistake our present economic difficulties for a minor setback or a passing inconvenience. A sea of change is washing over us, a period of profound transformation. The decisions that we make and the actions that we take will determine our direction well into this century.*

*-Governor Carcieri's Address to the Rhode Island Public, January 7, 2009*

There exists no greater threat to our collective prosperity in Rhode Island – and no greater opportunity – than our ability to raise the skill level and improve the competitiveness of our workers. A seismic shift is underway in our state, one that promises to forever alter the nature of how we work, what we produce and the markets in which we compete. The economy is in the throes of revolutionary change, characterized by rapidly-evolving technology, exponential growth in the flow of information and capital, and ever-intensifying global competitiveness and connectivity. The attendant disruption has been the catalyst for both tremendous growth, and as we are unfortunately seeing today, for amazingly rapid economic contraction.

The talent, ingenuity and work ethic of the people of Rhode Island have traditionally been our greatest competitive advantage. This must remain true if we are to successfully emerge from these recessionary times. Not since the industrial revolution began on the Pawtucket riverbanks has the workforce confronted such a dramatic change in the type of skills and training necessary to successfully participate and thrive in the economy. At that time, Rhode Island was at the vanguard of training. Cutting-edge skills were developed at such new and innovative institutions as the Rhode Island School of Design, originally chartered to train the industrial trades, and contributed to the creation of one of the most competitive and productive workforces ever employed anywhere in history.

Today, Rhode Island struggles to match this earlier effort. The jobs that are created today require increasingly more sophisticated training and education, at all levels. Conversely, our workforce is not keeping pace, and in fact, may be becoming relatively less-educated. This is exacerbated by several significant trends:

- The approaching retirement of the baby boom generation, the largest and most educated generation in American history;
- The smaller size of the post boomer generations and their relatively lower rates of college completion and work readiness;
- The impact of low literacy in-migration;
- The “brain drain” – college graduates that leave the state for more desirable jobs elsewhere.

These factors have conspired to produce a troubling skills gap that, if left unaddressed, will push Rhode Island to the edge of a precarious fault – a tipping point. Do we stand still and risk the erosion of our standard of living or step decisively, leaving no worker behind, towards acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in tomorrow's economy today?



The plan presented here is the Governor's Workforce Board of Rhode Island's (GWB), bold response. It is based on a fundamental assumption – that an aligned workforce system empowered to identify and eliminate the obstacles inhibiting the development and delivery of demand-driven training will be better positioned to create the opportunities for individuals to obtain the transferable skills they need. Each of plan's four primary goals is tied to a series of specific objectives that support its real-world application. These goals include:

**Goal 1: The Public System Grows, Retains, and Attracts Talent.** Rhode Island will maximize the capacity of the workforce development system to align, unify, and flexibly address the skill demands of all employers and job seekers.

**Goal 2: Employers Attract and Retain a Highly Skilled Workforce.** Rhode Island employers will attract, employ and retain a skilled and educated workforce committed to lifelong learning, thus ensuring growth and prosperity.

**Goal 3: The Adult Workforce is Skilled and Agile.** Adults will have the knowledge and skills needed to meet changing economic demand – for their own and the state's economic prosperity.

**Goal 4: Youth are Ready for Work and Lifelong Learning.** Youth will become more aware of skill development opportunities in order to take better advantage of those which enable them to meet changing workforce demand – for their own and for the state's future prosperity.

The Strategic Workforce Plan challenges the public workforce system to support a culture of lifelong learning; to increase its efficiency, effectiveness and capacity; create greater value-add to employers and individuals; to align its policies and resources across its partners; and to eliminate the barriers to skill development.

For employers it calls for increasing investment training and increasing the number of both self-sustaining jobs and high-wage jobs. It calls on firms within an industry to partner and align to reduce skill gaps, to augment the number of transferable skill credentials available to their workers, and to expand the potential pool of qualified workers.

For individuals, the plan supports an increase in the attainment of skill credentials; an increase in workforce attachment; and an increase in the employment rate of special populations. It calls for greater participation in adult education, and occupational skills training accompanied with basic skill training.

Finally, for youth – Rhode Island's emerging workforce – the plan demands that the system increase access to work-preparedness activities, including participation in apprenticeships; increase the number of youth that attain workforce credentials, including a high-school diploma and skill certificate; decrease post-secondary remediation rates; and increase educator understanding of the labor market.

Already, the very process of developing the plan has produced positive results. Through its broad-ranging involvement of stakeholders, the planning process has created an unprecedented degree of alignment among Rhode Island businesses; government agencies; labor organizations; community and faith-based organizations; public and private elementary/secondary and higher educational institutions in a shared vision that supports the plan's four goals. It has also offered Rhode Island the opportunity to dismantle the silos that



have long-divided the workforce system while leveraging and coordinating resources between public and private sectors.

As the plan moves forward, a Plan Management Team, under the auspices of the state's Workforce Cabinet and the Governor's Workforce Board, will continue to develop work plans based on this framework and the strategies and tactics outlined within. The team will provide a mechanism to ensure the plan's accountability and that it remains actionable, measurable and relevant.



## The Planning Process

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From its official inception in 2005, the Governor's Workforce Board promoted the concept of creating a statewide workforce development plan. With the strong support of Governor Carcieri, the board immediately began the process of convening key partners and stakeholders needed to make the plan a reality. Critical to the process was securing the endorsement of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, comprised of directors of major state agencies with components of workforce development within their agency mission. The following is a chronological account of the development and implementation schedule that resulted in creating Rhode Island's strategic workforce development plan.

- Jan. 03, 2007 → Statewide Workforce Plan concept presented to Workforce Cabinet
- Mar. 08, 2007 → Planning Launch Meeting with Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)
- Mar. 15, 2007 → CSW presents the planning process to the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB)
- Apr.– May 2007 → CSW conducts research with RI's Labor Market Information Office on RI Workforce
- Jun. 7-8, 2007 → Initial meeting of the Strategic Planning Advisory Group
- Jul. 26, 2007 → GWB staff updated Planning Group on status of CSW's efforts and next steps
- Aug.– Sept. 2007 → CSW and LMI Data compare research and analysis of June meeting assumptions
- Oct. 4, 2007 → Second meeting held of the Strategic Planning Advisory Group
- Oct. 21, 2007 → CSW issues revised plan outline resulting from the October planning meeting
- Dec. 4, 2007 → GWB Planning & Evaluation Committee Meeting – defined roles & processes
- Dec. 5, 2007 → Workforce Cabinet Meeting – status of planning process & next steps
- Dec. 17, 2007 → GWB Meeting – status report presented
- Dec. 2007 → Convene Steering Committee to advance development of the plan
- Jan. 2008 → GWB Planning and Evaluation Committee progress review
- April 17, 2008 → Presentation of draft plan to GWB
- June 11, 2008 → Presentation of draft plan to Workforce Cabinet
- June-Nov. 2008 → Workforce Cabinet/Plan Management Team- draft planning elements
- June 10-12, 2008 → Conduct focus groups and report results
- Sept.-Nov. 2008 → Steering committee and stakeholders convened to refine objectives and strategies
- Nov 12, 2008 → Planning and Evaluation Committee review and work session
- Jan. 21, 2009 → Draft plan presented to the Planning Advisory Committee
- Jan. 22, 2009 → Anticipated GWB approval of draft plan
- Feb. 18, 2009 → Scheduled public hearing on Draft State Strategic Workforce Plan
- March 12, 2009 → Anticipated GWB approval of Strategic Workforce Plan
- April 2009 → Scheduled start of plan implementation



## Introduction

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The states and regions that are successful in today's economy are characterized by dynamic markets; participation in the global economy; innovative citizens and businesses; high productivity; educated, skilled and agile workers; accessible and affordable lifelong learning; and publicly funded programs that are strategically aligned and responsive to connecting workforce, education and economic issues. Under the leadership of the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB), the collective efforts of many public and private agencies, organizations, firms, and people have developed a plan to serve as the blueprint for making strategic investments of resources and energy in Rhode Island's future.

### Tomorrow's Economy, Today

Rhode Island has both assets and challenges in this competitive environment. The state's many assets are sources of strength that need to be better leveraged for success. While the challenges may often seem formidable, the willingness between public and private partners to collaborate is strong. Working together on clear goals and strategies to achieve success will ensure Rhode Island's long-standing position as a place of choice.

Rhode Island's economy continues to transition from one strongly based on industrial manufacturing to one based increasingly on knowledge and information. While most sectors experienced declining employment in the last year, health care and social assistance saw an increase of 500 jobs; educational services added 200 jobs; and the information sector remained even. This fast-emerging knowledge-based economy has increased the demand for workers with more advanced education levels and skills than at any time in the past. To obtain and succeed in these jobs, workers will generally require some level of postsecondary education or skill training, though not necessarily a four-year degree. Technological advances and globalization have furthered significant changes in both the technology and organizational needs of the American workplace. Employers have invested heavily in technology, and have instituted high-performance workplace practices. However, these changes can only thrive where the workers have the needed skills. Rhode Island residents must be prepared to both learn and use current and emerging technologies and to function effectively in high-performance workplaces. Worker success also relies on the attainment of higher levels of education and training. Global competition and the foreign outsourcing of knowledge-based work are intensifying, which raises concerns about the future and our ability to compete.

Even during economic downturns, some employers continue to report a shortage of job applicants with the requisite skills for the contemporary workplace. Rhode Island's rich history of ethnic diversity has been characterized by a strong work ethic, which has contributed to the growth and success of the former manufacturing base. While this served the state well in the past, current and future economic trends continue to influence the demand for a more highly educated and skilled workforce. Education and skill differences that limit the ability of many residents to participate in the economy must be changed. The state's workforce development system faces the challenge of preparing its residents with the skills employers seek and need. Education and training are key ingredients to ensure economic growth and competitiveness. The state's willingness to invest in educating and training its workforce will largely determine the long-term growth rate and future of Rhode Island's economy.



## Goals and Objectives at a Glance

<p><b>Goal 1: The Public System Grows, Retains and Attracts Talent.</b></p> <p>Rhode Island will maximize the capacity of the workforce development system to align, unify and flexibly address the skill demands of all employers and job seekers.</p>	<p><b>Goal 2: Employers Attract and Retain a Highly Skilled Workforce.</b></p> <p>Rhode Island employers will attract and employ a skilled and educated workforce committed to lifelong learning, thus ensuring growth and prosperity.</p>
<p><i>Objective 1.1: Align Systems</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.2: Eliminate Barriers</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.3: Create a Value-Added Public System</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.4: Increase Effectiveness</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.5: Increase Efficiency</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.6: Increase Capacity</i></p> <p><i>Objective 1.7: Support a Culture of Lifelong Learning</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 2.1: Increase Employer Investments in Training</i></p> <p><i>Objective 2.2: Increase the Number of Self-Sustaining Jobs</i></p> <p><i>Objective 2.3: Increase Employer Involvement in Apprenticeships</i></p> <p><i>Objective 2.4: Expand Skill Partnerships</i></p> <p><i>Objective 2.5: Increase Credentials</i></p> <p><i>Objective 2.6: Increase Fill Rate of High-Wage Jobs</i></p>
<p><b>Goal 3: The Adult Workforce is Skilled and Agile.</b></p> <p>Adults will have the knowledge and skills needed to meet changing economic demand – for their own and the state’s economic prosperity.</p>	<p><b>Goal 4: Youth Are Ready for Work and Lifelong Learning.</b></p> <p>Youth will take advantage of skill development opportunities that enable them to meet changing demand – for their own and the state’s future prosperity.</p>
<p><i>Objective 3.1: Increase Employment Rates of Special Populations</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.2: Increase Workforce Attachment</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.3: Increase Workforce Mobility</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.4: Increase Skill Attainment Rate</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.5: Increase Credential Rate</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.6: Increase Participation in Adult Education</i></p> <p><i>Objective 3.7: Integrate Basic Skills Training with Occupational Skills Training</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 4.1: Increase Access to Work-Preparedness Activities</i></p> <p><i>Objective 4.2: Decrease Postsecondary Remediation Rates</i></p> <p><i>Objective 4.3: Increase the Capacity of Youth-Serving Organizations</i></p> <p><i>Objective 4.4: Increase Youth Participation in Apprenticeships</i></p> <p><i>Objective 4.5: Increase Youth with Credentials</i></p> <p><i>Objective 4.6: Increase Educator Understanding of the Labor Market</i></p>

## The Vision

### **Rhode Island's prosperity is powered by knowledge and skills.**

*Imagine a Rhode Island where workers and industry are committed to lifelong learning; businesses are characterized by their ability to innovate, prosper and compete; communities cooperate to improve the region; young people make sound career decisions based on relevant and current information and continue their careers in Rhode Island; and public policy, including funded programs, is strategically aligned and responsive to resolving workforce, education and economic issues.*

For Rhode Island to compete and prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic success is dependent upon the creation and sustainability of a knowledgeable and skilled workforce that will support not only the growth of existing businesses, but the addition of new, high wage industries. Nearly **one-third of the new job growth** that is expected by 2016 is likely to occur among jobs requiring postsecondary education at all levels.

The systems that create the policies and implement the strategies that connect workers and the workplace must be both agile and innovative in their responsiveness to market driven demands and shifts in the state's economy and demographics.

While assumptions about the future of Rhode Island's workforce and job market appear bleak by current indicators, the state has the opportunity to improve the forecast. By directly influencing those factors that challenge the status quo, Rhode Island can realize its potential for prosperity both in the present and for the future.

Rhode Island will be prosperous in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because our people and firms will have a competitive level of education and training, accessed through a delivery system that aligns all resources, public and private, to provide the *right* skills at the *right* time.

There are four key factors in the success equation. First and foremost is the **system** that creates the environment and provides the resources, supports and services that facilitate success for employers, adults and youth.

The second factor is the **employers** who create jobs; invest their own resources in facilities, technology and training; and who drive the skills of the workforce through high expectations and financial rewards for meeting those expectations.

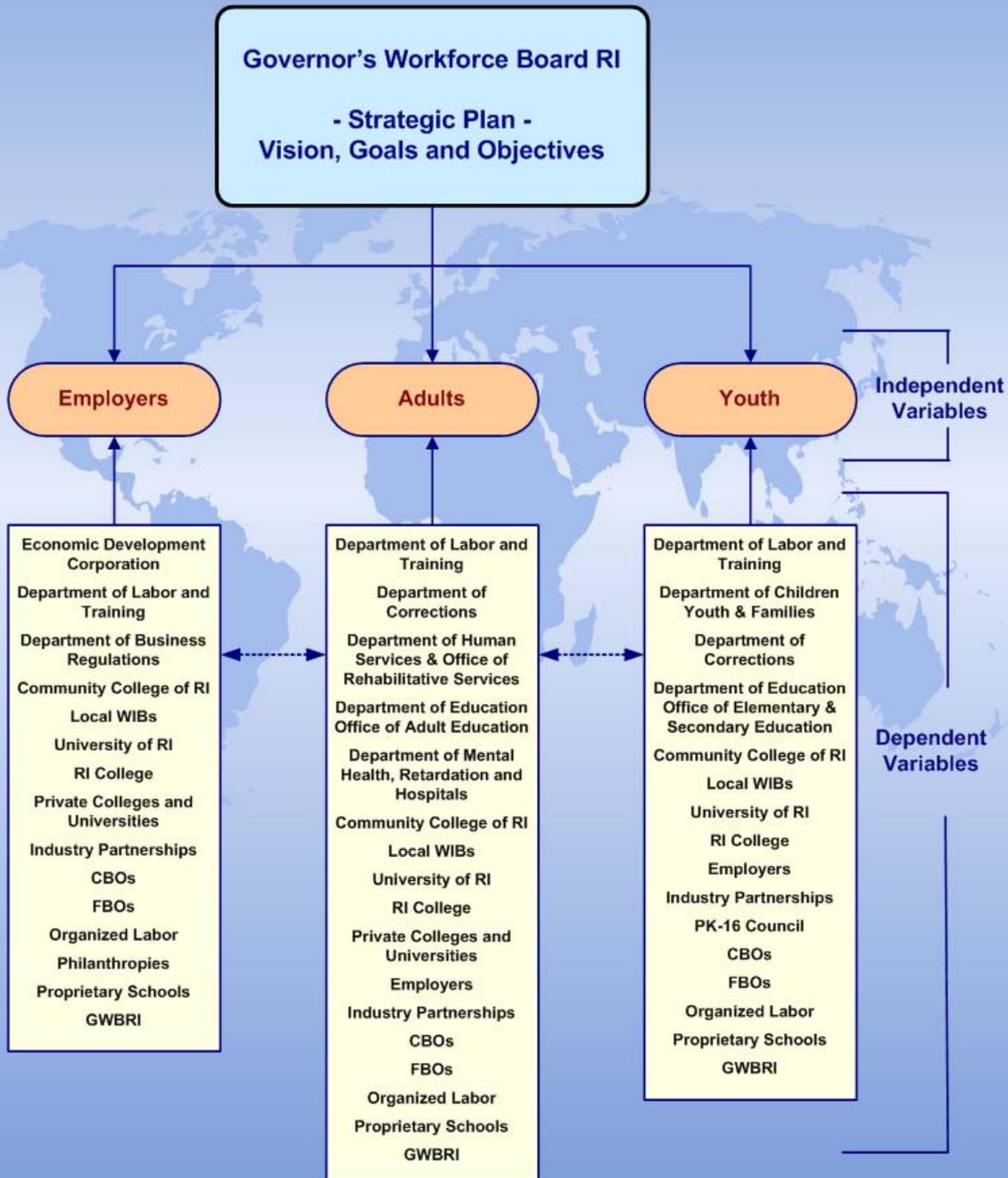
The third factor is the **adult workforce**. Presently and for the next few decades, the workforce is and will be comprised primarily of individuals who have not been engaged in education or training since leaving high school or college. Their willingness and ability to participate in lifelong learning and skill acquisition will largely drive the ability of employers to innovate and compete.

The final factor in the equation is the **emerging workforce** (youth). Youth must have a strong foundation for success both in postsecondary education and advanced technical training. We cannot afford a generation that is not equipped to be competitive both on a regional and global level.

The Governor's Workforce Board has established goals and objectives for each of the four areas. The leadership of the **system** will address these goals and objectives by collectively creating strategies, and participating in the creation of a business plan to achieve solid results. While much effort has already been invested in building the foundation, success depends on continuing the work and collaboration. The investment of public funds has been directed toward the goals even while this plan was evolving.



The graphic below relates the system to the goals. The Governor's vision and plan provides the overall direction for the state. Various components of the system are responsible to align their policies and investments with the objectives.



# Goal 1: The Public System Grows, Retains and Attracts Talent.

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**Rhode Island will maximize the capacity of the workforce development system to align, unify and flexibly address the skill demands of all employers and job seekers.**

Systems can be notoriously rule-bound, bureaucratic, lacking in technology, mired in paperwork, and often unaccountable. Policies and regulations are often counterproductive, outdated and contradictory across agencies and funding streams. Across the nation, states are working to increase the relevance and alignment of their education, employment and economic development systems to address capacity, demographic shifts and employer demand. The system continues to be challenged with unfunded federal and state mandates, restrictive rules and regulations; competition from private intermediaries; outdated job specifications; and an aging workforce.

Anecdotal evidence from the business community often points to governmental systems as more reactive than proactive, thus their reluctance to utilize them fully. They assert that on-demand training to meet their workforce needs is difficult, that too many job applicants lack soft skills such as critical thinking and communication, and that while graduates may have the intellect, they lack the ability to share their knowledge.

An example of the lack of system alignment exists among secondary and postsecondary education and the workforce. The remediation rates in public community colleges (approaching 60 percent) represent an enormous waste of time and taxpayers' money. Why aren't students who earned a high school diploma ready to enter immediately and succeed in credit classes that will accelerate their path to a credential and employment? Part of the reason may be the lack of alignment between the skills needed to graduate from high school or obtain a GED and the skills needed to enter college. It comes as a surprise to many GED recipients that their hard-earned credential still does not mean they are ready for college without additional studies. Rhode Island is ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of its educational policy alignment. Notably, credits for a high school diploma are not aligned with the postsecondary system, high school assessments are not aligned with the postsecondary system, and high school assessments are not used for postsecondary decisions.

***Rhode Island Educational Alignment Policies*** (*Education Week*, 4 January 2007)

## Early-Childhood Education

<b>Early learning</b> – State early-learning standards aligned with K-12 standards (2006-07)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>School-readiness definition</b> – State formally defines school readiness (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>School-readiness assessment</b> – Readiness of entering students assessed (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>School-readiness intervention</b> – Programs for students not deemed ready (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>Kindergarten standards</b> – Learning expectations aligned with elementary (2006-07)	<b>Yes</b>

## Postsecondary Education

<b>College readiness</b> – State defines college readiness (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>College preparation</b> – College prep required to earn a high school diploma (2006-07)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Course alignment</b> – Credits for H.S. diploma aligned with postsecondary system (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>Assessment alignment</b> – H.S. assessment aligned with postsecondary system (2006-07)	<b>No</b>
<b>Postsecondary decisions</b> – H.S. assessment used for postsecondary decisions (2006-07)	<b>No</b>



## Economy and Workforce

<b>Work readiness</b> – State K-12 system defines work readiness (2006-07)	No
<b>Work-ready distinction</b> – Work-ready definition differs from college readiness (2006-07)	No
<b>Career-tech diploma</b> – State offers H.S. diploma with career specialization (2006-07)	Yes
<b>Industry certification</b> – K-12 path for industry-recognized certificate or license (2006-07)	Yes
<b>Portable credits</b> – K-12 pathway to earn career-tech credits for postsecondary (2006-07)	No

## Existing Efforts

- In concert with the local workforce boards, a significant investment is being made by the Governor’s Workforce Board in rebuilding the technological capacity of the netWORKri career centers. Replacing computer equipment in use since 1997 and employing new software programs and functions that provide computerized skills assessments, job matching and more realistic job postings by employers will result in greater efficiency and referrals of more qualified candidates for available job openings.
- The United Way’s *Skill Up Rhode Island* initiative funds sector partnerships to create workforce development systems that are more cohesive, better aligned with employer and worker needs, and more proactive in improving the gaps between the labor market and its stakeholders.
- The Department of Labor and Training staff members, specialized in employer services, assist employers with a variety of hiring and recruiting needs: placing job orders, organizing and coordinating job fairs and recruitments, providing information on programs (such as employee upgrade training and tax credits), and connecting to other workforce partners, particularly the Economic Development Corporation.

## Objectives and Menu of Strategies\*

**Objective 1.1 – Align Systems.** *Enhance workforce development, education and economic development public policy to be more efficient, effective and flexible so that all youth, workers and employers can access opportunities and develop their skills and knowledge needed to participate in and contribute to the development of the Rhode Island economy.*

\*NOTE: All strategies throughout the plan represent a menu of possibilities from which state leadership may select, based upon available resources and changing economic conditions.

### Strategy Menu

- 1.1.1 Align and strengthen industry partnerships around targeted, high-wage sectors. Create guidelines and expectations for industry partnership outcomes that involve secondary, postsecondary, workforce development, union, economic development, and industry representatives. Outcomes will include documentable resolution of skill gaps and shortages.
- 1.1.2 Institutionalize the interagency relationship between the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and the workforce development system through more formal arrangements.
- 1.1.3 Identify common goals and desired outcomes that are reflected in both the Governor’s PK-16 Council and the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training’s plans.



- 1.1.4 Identify common goals and desired outcomes that are reflected in both the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission's and the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training's plans.
- 1.1.5 Incorporate in all federal and state-funded workforce training, when applicable, the blueprint put forth by the Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) to educate and train state residents.
- 1.1.6 Increase outreach to unions and employers in industry partnerships to increase alignment of programming and enhance gainful employment and advancement options.
- 1.1.7 Establish a standing interagency and possibly interstate work group (Workforce Cabinet subcommittee) that monitors emerging funding opportunities and can mobilize rapidly to develop regional comprehensive, strategic joint responses.
- 1.1.8 Create standards for "work plus learn" models for newly employed low-skilled individuals and monitor the workforce system against the criteria.
- 1.1.9 Improve rehabilitation programs/services in a manner that increases employment outcomes through greater alignment with the workforce development system, better understanding of business needs and improved matching of consumer interests, abilities and skills.
- 1.1.10 Deliver a training module for staff of the workforce development system around working with individuals with disabilities\*.
- 1.1.11 Appoint an interagency taskforce to evaluate and revise incentives that encourage businesses to hire ex-offenders.
- 1.1.12 Establish a work group of the Workforce Cabinet and others as needed to review best practices regarding entrepreneurship and business management training.
- 1.1.13 Ensure mutual representation, participation and communication across all workforce, education and economic development related boards, commissions and councils.
- 1.1.14 Assign the Adult Education Committee to identify best practices in working with newly-arrived immigrant populations in workforce development and adult education. Include community leaders from host communities on the taskforce.

**Objective 1.2 – Eliminate Barriers.** *Establish and implement a systematic approach to the elimination of policy, administrative and programmatic barriers in order to facilitate more efficient and effective interaction between private industry, individuals and the public workforce development system to collaborate more efficiently and effectively.*

### **Strategy Menu**

- 1.2.1 Create an interagency taskforce to establish an on-going process for identifying policy barriers by 2010. Identify policies that inhibit people from obtaining work, retaining work, moving up in the workplace and accessing higher skills. Identify public policy that

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\* As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (42 USC 12101 et. seq.)



discourages employers from up-skilling their workforce. Success in eliminating barriers will be demonstrated by improved customer satisfaction (both employers and job seekers) and a better return on investment.

- 1.2.2 Establish an interagency taskforce to review potential federal waivers for Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other programs that allow waivers to better align federally-funded workforce development programs with the Rhode Island Industry Skills Development Initiative and other non-WIA programs.
- 1.2.3 Appoint a taskforce comprised of representatives of state and local career and technical education from the secondary and postsecondary levels and from Industry Partnerships to establish guidelines for utilizing business advisory councils.

**Objective 1.3 – Create a Value-Added Public System.** *Create a workforce intelligence system that has the capability to inform the development of relevant, agile and timely skill training for growth industries in a rapidly-changing economy.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 1.3.1 Develop and implement methods to identify and resolve workforce supply issues.
- 1.3.2 Engage Industry Partnerships with One-Stop Career Centers to conduct on-site activities including recruitment, assessment, interviewing of training applicants and the provision of training.
- 1.3.3 Connect regional community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) to One-Stop Career Centers to increase referrals and access to services.

**Objective 1.4 – Increase Effectiveness.** *Create an evaluation agenda and system to assess effectiveness, performance and customer satisfaction for the entire workforce development system to ensure improved outcomes on measures of interest and greater customer satisfaction results.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 1.4.1 Establish an interagency work group (Workforce Cabinet subcommittee) charged with developing a set of measures and minimum goals where possible across all agencies involved in workforce development and with creating an implementation plan that includes the evaluation and alignment of agency information systems.

**Objective 1.5 – Increase Efficiency.** *Redesign the workforce development system architecture in a manner that increases access and yields higher levels of cost-efficiency as demonstrated by cost efficiency and return-on-investment studies.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 1.5.1 Use the procurement process for the next three-year funding cycle to streamline the number of providers and networks serving adult education, youth and netWORKri.



- 1.5.2 Conduct net impact studies of the workforce development system and return-on-investment studies every two years.

**Objective 1.6 – Increase Capacity.** *Create access to well-trained and adequately compensated workforce development professionals to ensure quality of services throughout the workforce development system.*

### Strategy Menu

- 1.6.1 Each state agency that provides workforce and economic development-related programs will provide access and incentives for frontline professionals throughout the entire system to complete competency-based training that leads to high-standard, widely-recognized and Governor’s Workforce Board-approved certification and/or Board of Regents-approved certification.
- 1.6.2 The Rhode Island Department of Adult and Secondary Education, Office of Adult and Career and Technical Education, will develop for Governor’s Workforce Board-endorsement and Board of Regents-endorsement or approval work-based preparation, development, credentialing and compensation systems for adult education professionals.

**Objective 1.7 – Support a Culture of Lifelong Learning.** *Establish a systematic approach towards the development of a culture of lifelong learning as demonstrated by increased rates of participation in adult education programs and increased enrollment of working adults in postsecondary education and industry training.*

### Strategy Menu

- 1.7.1 Develop and implement a lifelong learning marketing campaign.
- 1.7.2 Distribute public information to youth, workers and employers to make them aware of all programs, including non-traditional methods of receiving training such as e-learning, and encourage their use.
- 1.7.3 Promote and integrate family support and asset building skills throughout the workforce system.



## Goal 2: Employers Attract and Retain a Highly Skilled Workforce.

**Rhode Island employers will attract, employ, retain, train and have access to a skilled and educated workforce committed to lifelong learning, thus ensuring growth and prosperity.**

Rhode Island is characterized by too many jobs that do not provide a livable wage; a large percentage of jobs in industries that pay below the national average; continued loss of manufacturing jobs; a high cost of doing business and non-competitive tax structure; and declining funds available for worker training.

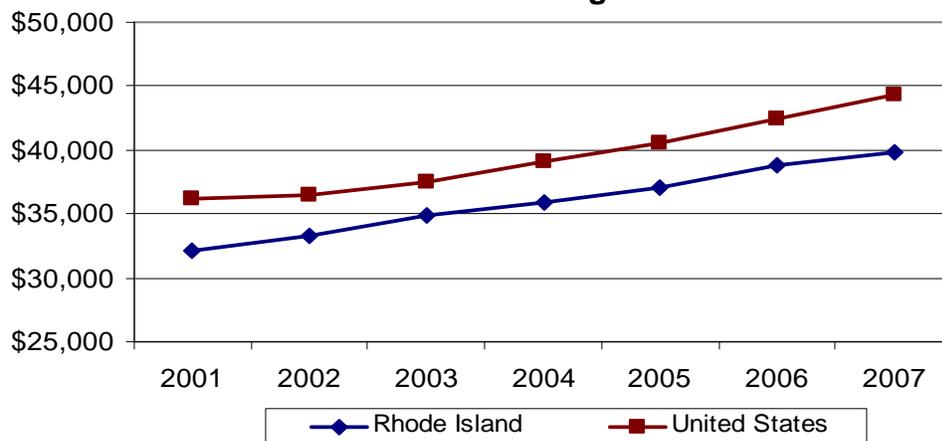
Private sector jobs in Rhode Island pay lower than the national average. As the chart below indicates, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that the state's 2007 annual average private sector wage of \$39,846 continues to rank below the national average of \$44,362. The Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation's Economic Growth Plan for 2008 states that "we must make it easier to do business and reduce the regulatory burden facing businesses in Rhode Island." The plan further states that "we must protect the gains we have made in improving our business climate and identifying new actions to strengthen our competitiveness."

More good jobs are needed according to the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation:

The state...has too few knowledge-based jobs in industries like health care, biotechnology, digital media and financial services," [Saul Kaplan] said. "Only 40 percent of our jobs pay above the national average.... Massachusetts is 60 percent, Connecticut is 60 percent, which should be our goal."

"Leading in Job Losses, Rhode Island Struggles On," *New York Times*, 10-25-08

**Private Sector Wages**



Source: 2007 Quarterly Census of Employment & Wage Data – US Bureau of Labor Statistics

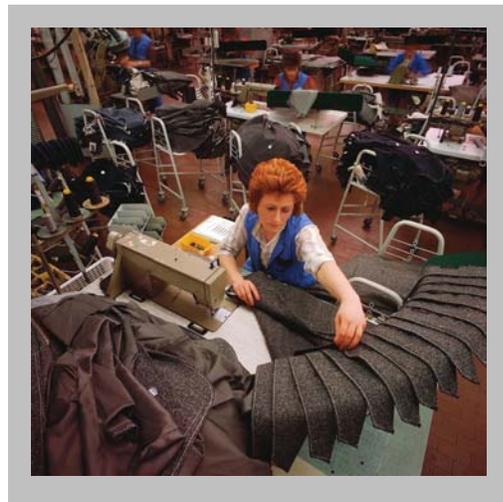
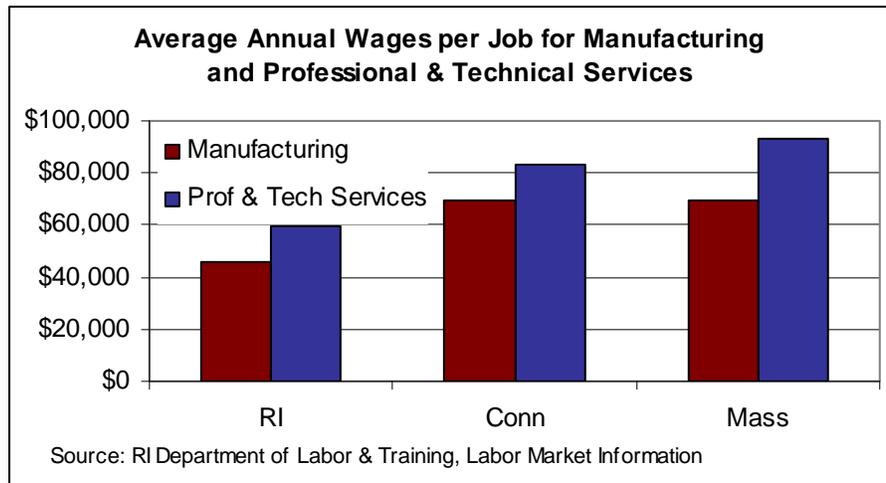
Comparing Rhode Island's wages in manufacturing and professional and technical services to those of its neighbors highlights the state's non-competitive wages (chart following). Part of the reason for low manufacturing wages is a lower value-add per manufacturing production hour worked. Rhode Island is ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation in terms of high-tech manufacturing, with only



27.5 percent of manufacturing employment in high-tech manufacturing industries. Rhode Island's value added per hour is only \$74.70 compared to \$105.80 in Connecticut and \$112.90 in Massachusetts.

There are many ways in which our employer community can create opportunities for prosperity. Employers create demand. When employers **value knowledge and skills**, the workforce is motivated to acquire

those skills. Value is demonstrated by recruiting on the basis of demonstrated knowledge and skills rather than job history. Many employers still rely on resumes and interviews for hiring rather than assessment and observation of performance. The result can be frustrating for both the employer and the worker.



Manufacturing has suffered a loss of 20,400 jobs since 2000. Manufacturing's share of total jobs declined from 14.9 percent in 2000 to 10.3 percent in 2007. Following the national trend, continued employment declines are projected through 2016 for Rhode Island's Manufacturing sector. Job losses of nearly 5,000 are expected, with the largest losses occurring in Miscellaneous Manufacturing (-1,771), Textile Mills (-1,124) and Fabricated Metal Products (-899). A few industries within this sector are expected to add jobs, with the largest gains projected for Chemical Manufacturing (+860) and Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (+532), both of which averaged higher annual wages in 2007 than the Manufacturing sector (\$46,118) as a whole.

The growth of the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is a major factor in Rhode Island's growth. From 2000-2007, Rhode Island experienced a net gain of 16,300 jobs, of which 10,800 were in Health Care and Social Assistance. At 15.4 percent of all employment, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the largest in the state.



Over the last seven years, high rates of job growth have been seen in construction, financial activities, private educational services, arts and entertainment, professional and business services, and health care and social assistance.

### Rhode Island Jobs by Major Sector 2000 and 2007 (in thousands)

	2000	2007	Change '00 to '07	
	Employment		Net	Percent
Total	476.7	493.0	16.3	3.4%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.2	0.3	0.1	50.0%
Construction	18.2	22.1	3.9	21.4%
Manufacturing	71.2	50.8	-20.4	-28.7%
Wholesale Trade	16.6	17.1	0.5	3.0%
Retail Trade	52.1	51.7	-0.4	-0.8%
Transportation & Utilities	11.0	11.0	0	0%
Information	10.9	10.5	-0.4	-4.0%
Financial Activities	31.1	34.9	3.8	12.2%
Professional & Business Services	50.9	56.1	5.2	10.2%
Educational Services (Private)	18.0	23.4	5.4	30.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	65.2	76.0	10.8	16.6%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	6.7	8.0	1.3	19.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	39.6	43.2	3.6	9.1%
Other Services	20.8	23.2	2.4	11.5%
Government/Public Education	64.4	64.6	0.2	0.3%

Source: Labor Market Information Division

Projections to the year 2016 were made prior to the current recession based on this historical trend. The recession has hit Rhode Island particularly hard. Despite the projections below, the state experienced year-over-year losses in Manufacturing (-3,200), Government (-2,400), Professional & Business Services (-2,200), Retail Trade (-2,100), Financial Activities (-1,400), Other Services (-1,200), and Construction (-1,100) from October 2007 to October 2008.

### Rhode Island Industry Projections by Major Sector, 2006 – 2016

Industry Title	2006 Estimated Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>522,911</b>	<b>570,461</b>	<b>47,550</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, And Hunting	902	905	3	0.3%
Mining	259	270	11	4.2%
Utilities	1,144	1,160	16	1.4%
Construction	22,803	24,965	2,162	9.5%
Manufacturing	52,726	47,900	-4,826	-9.2%
Wholesale Trade	16,969	18,255	1,286	7.6%



Industry Title	2006 Estimated Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Retail Trade	51,714	54,550	2,836	5.5%
Transportation & Warehousing	9,834	11,250	1,416	14.4%
Information	10,878	12,050	1,172	10.8%
Finance & Insurance	26,492	29,895	3,403	12.8%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	6,847	6,940	93	1.4%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	21,569	25,680	4,111	19.1%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	9,341	10,500	1,159	12.4%
Administrative & Waste Services	25,388	26,800	1,412	5.6%
Educational Services	46,322	51,000	4,678	10.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	76,081	91,100	15,019	19.7%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	7,693	9,145	1,452	18.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	42,560	48,900	6,340	14.9%
Other Services (Except Government)	18,118	20,150	2,032	11.2%
Government	33,139	32,500	-639	-1.9%
Self-Employed & Unpaid Family Workers	42,132	46,546	4,414	10.5%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Labor Market Information Unit

Slightly more than half of all jobs in the state's economy are considered lower skilled. *Education Week* magazine used O\*Net Job Zone classifications to determine the percentage of lower-skill versus desirable (higher skill) jobs for all regions across the nation. Jobs in zones 1 and 2, which generally require no more than a year's training, are classified as lower skilled. According to data from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training's Labor Market Information (LMI) Division, an estimated 53.3 percent of the state's jobs can be classified as lower skilled under this definition.

Training/Education/Experience Requirements	2006 Estimate		2016 Projection	
	Employment	Percent	Employment	Percent
Total Employment*	489,520	100.0%	533,479	100.0%
Lower-Skilled Jobs – Zones 1-2	260,934	53.3%	281,258	52.7%
Desirable Jobs – Zones 3-5	228,586	46.7%	252,221	47.3%

\*Jobs for which O\*Net Job Zone classifications are determined.  
Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Labor Market Information Division

Rhode Island is trailing in the percent of service-providing employment in high-tech, service industries. Rhode Island is in the bottom half of the nation at 27<sup>th</sup> place. Employers can **invest**

**in on-going training** for their workforce. When workers have more skills, they become more valuable *and* more satisfied with their employer. Increased worker loyalty leads to lower turnover, which results in savings to the firm. Employers are one of the best sources of skill training, and they currently invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in their workers every year. We do not have a good grasp of what training exists in the private sector, nor what the potential may be. In the face of rapidly changing economies and skill requirements, it may be time to redefine the role of employers in developing the pipeline of future workers.

Employers can be **partners** in the system, acting in an advisory capacity; clearly defining what is meant by “job ready;” and communicating the type, level, and quantity of skills needed now and in the future. Our Industry Partnerships can play a strong role in this strategy. The Industry Partnerships could:

- Conduct an environmental scan of the training programs in their respective industries.
- Identify existing employer and industry-certified programs and the potential for increasing the portability of credentials.
- Investigate national and international employer-certifications that make sense for Rhode Island.
- Participate in defining meaningful skill credentials, and once such credentials are identified, agree to recognize and value them.
- Provide opportunities for teachers and counselors to participate in industry tours to learn about the industry, occupations and skill applications.
- Determine the potential to loan skilled trades people to schools to assist with teaching.
- Determine the potential for industry to provide career and technical education on site to young people and adults using their own equipment and trainers; determine the tuition or cost for such on-site education.
- Identify best practices in their industries for utilizing retirees or older workers to transfer knowledge to the next generation, and determine how this could be expanded.
- Develop a peer-to-peer network of mentors to encourage and help design incumbent worker training programs and determine the return on investment.
- Develop a template that industry peers can use to create job postings that clearly specify what skills are truly prerequisites, and those for which employers are willing to train. The current method of job postings anticipates fully qualified and experienced workers for every opening, despite verbal claims that employers are willing to train individuals who have foundation skills. The result is that people who would be excellent workers are screened out of opportunities.
- Participate in defining career ladders/pathways and skill matrices for individuals within their respective industries and firms.
- Identify existing apprenticeships (as approved by the U.S. Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training) that exist within their respective industries and the employers involved; set goals for increased employer sponsorships.
- Identify demographics of current participants in apprenticeships for base-lining and targeting purposes.



Employers can be economic developers who **expand their workforce** and create **good jobs** through investments in new equipment and technology, developing new markets, adopting new processes, being innovative, and becoming globally connected.

Employers can provide **workplace supports** for low-income workers, such as dependent care, tax and savings asset building mechanisms, and transportation and housing supports. Research has shown that workplace supports for low-income workers result in improved retention, increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and increased worker competency and likelihood for advancement (Litchfield, Swanberg & Sigworth, 2004).

## Existing Efforts

- The Governor's Workforce Board awards grants to businesses to increase the skills and education levels of their workforce. Since its establishment, the Board has invested \$5.4 million in 250 companies to train 13,238 incumbent workers. Because the grants require a one-to-one match, employers have also invested a minimum of \$5.4 million of their own resources in their workers.
- The board invested \$2 million to create nine industry partnerships around seven targeted industry sectors: health services, manufacturing, information technology, construction, marine trades, bio-technology, and hospitality and tourism. Industry partnerships collaborate on strategies to reduce and eliminate skills gaps in high-growth, high-wage sectors of the economy.
- The board invested \$2.6million in new worker training to allow 34 companies to create 1,366 jobs.
- The board continues to approve applications for tax incentives for job training of qualifying workers. To obtain the tax credits, 66 companies to date have invested \$10.6 million to train 10,337 employees.
- Investments have been made in export training assistance to help businesses become more global.
- *Skill Up Rhode Island* is a community impact initiative funded by the United Way that aims to foster workforce stabilization for employers by increasing worker quality and productivity and reducing employee turnover. It also aims to support the development of expert knowledge of the workplace culture of specific employers to better bridge the gap between their needs and employee competence. Retention services are offered to every employer.
- The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, through a Governor's Workforce Board grant, is investing in new assessment technology for the state's netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers that will more accurately determine the skill levels of applicants for specific jobs to ensure a better match to the demand.



- A non-profit Business Innovation Factory (BIF) was launched in 2004 to create a real-world laboratory for testing new ideas. BIF created a platform for bringing the public and private sectors together to transform how value is delivered across all sectors.
- The Economic Development Corporation's Every Company Counts, coordinates public and quasi-public services to create, sustain, and grow small businesses.
- To encourage more investments in customized training, Rhode Island was granted a waiver from the U.S. Department of Labor to change the 50 percent required match to a match based upon a sliding scale.
- The 2005 Jobs Partnership package is a set of initiatives to address Rhode Island's high tax burden, foster strong relationships and understanding of economic development issues with the General Assembly, support small and minority-owned business, develop strong sites to attract and retain companies, maintain momentum in life and marine life sciences, attract more capital to technology ventures and increase the state's competitive advantage in the area of innovation.

## Objectives and Menu of Strategies

**Objective 2.1 – Increase Employer Investments in Training.** Increase employer investments in incumbent workforce training.

### Strategy Menu

- 2.1.1 Streamline the approval process for and increase awareness, access and use of the various state and federal job training tax credits, such as the RI Investment Tax Credit, RI Jobs Training Tax Credit and the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (i.e. allowing GWB approval of the tax credits after the training is accomplished).
- 2.1.2 Require that any private company or industry partnership receiving public workforce development grant funds commit to providing job shadowing opportunities and/or teacher externships with local high school(s) or career and technical school(s) that expose youth and educators to industry and career opportunities and pathways.

Too often, qualified workers leave jobs because of family issues, transportation or child care problems, or discomfort with “fitting in” in the workplace. Services exist to help workers overcome the problems and maintain employment, but employers and people may not know about them or how to access them. A resource guide for employers that enables them to direct their workers to the right place or places, or even outline accommodations employers can make themselves would be helpful. Michigan, for example, which is second only to Rhode Island in unemployment, produced a Low-Wage Worker Toolkit for Employers.

<http://www.skilledwork.org/pdfs/LOW-WAGE-REV-2-26-07.pdf>



- 2.1.3 Require that Industry Partnerships receiving workforce development grants through the GWB and local workforce investment board match grant funds by a minimum of 25 percent with private investment.
- 2.1.4. Identify, expand and grow employer-based training.

**Objective 2.2 – Increase the Number of Self-Sustaining Jobs.** *Increase the number of employers offering opportunities for upward mobility through career pathway development.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 2.2.1 Increase training resources annually which focus on high-wage sectors that provide workers with good opportunities to move from lower-paying entry-level positions to higher-wage positions. Strategically invest limited resources in the industry sectors that pay above the national average wage.

**Objective 2.3 – Increase Employer Involvement in Apprenticeships.** *Increase employer involvement, including those from high-demand and high-wage industries, with the State Apprenticeship Council and apprenticeship program as demonstrated by an increased number of apprenticeship opportunities.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 2.3.1 Complete a comprehensive evaluation of the Rhode Island Apprenticeship Program.
- 2.3.2 Identify the range of apprentice-ready occupations. Identify employers in the state who employ individuals in those occupations. Direct the workforce system's business and industry representatives to call upon those employers individually to discuss the value of apprenticeships and identify any barriers to using the apprenticeship model that could be removed.

**Objective 2.4 – Expand Skill Partnerships.** *Expand the reach, influence and coordination of regional and industry skills partnerships that engage employers in addressing both worker supply and employer issues which impact our economic prosperity as demonstrated by a greater number of formal partnerships and a greater number of employers engaged in each partnership.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 2.4.1 Establish industry partnerships for emerging sectors.
- 2.4.2 Establish a task group to develop incentives for employers to increase the number of employers offering student internships and educator externships.
- 2.4.3 Evaluate, promote and incentivize the provision of worker retention services by Rhode Island employers.
- 2.4.4 Support industry partnerships through quarterly Governor's Workforce Board-facilitated information-sharing and technical assistance regarding effective practices.



**Objective 2.5. – Increase Credentials.** *Increase the number of employer-certified, transportable training programs and credentials as documented by a statewide inventory of training programs leading to industry-recognized credentials.*

### **Strategy Menu**

- 2.5.1 Conduct and maintain a statewide inventory of existing training programs and credentials to determine where gaps might exist and what overlap or duplication might be corrected.
- 2.5.2 Convene quarterly industry sector forums, led by Industry Partners, that develop industry specific training programs and credentials that are transportable; map employers' worker supply and workforce issues, resulting in actionable plans; and assist companies in the development of career ladder pathways for their prospective workforce.

**Objective 2.6 – Increase Fill Rate of High-Wage Jobs.** *Increase the rate at which vacant, high-wage jobs become filled as documented by the number and length of time high-wage, high-skill job postings remain unfilled in the state's job matching system.*

### **Strategy Menu**

- 2.6.1 Link workforce development job matching system to all post-secondary institutions to capture graduates in the system.
- 2.6.2 Increase the percentage of employer postings for high-skilled, high-wage job postings.
- 2.6.3 Increase the accuracy and relevancy of employer job postings.
- 2.6.4 Enhance the service delivery model of the One-Stop Career Center system by upgrading and implementing draft technologies and other organizational methods to increase accessibility (including for the incarcerated), build system capacity, and engage jobseekers and employers through a virtual One-Stop system that includes online applications through self-service portals, skill assessment tools and educational assessment tools.



## Goal 3: The Adult Workforce is Skilled and Agile.

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**Adults will have the knowledge and skills needed to meet changing economic demand – for their own and the state’s economic prosperity.**

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Thanks to a combination of abundant natural resources; a stable political environment; a tax and regulatory climate conducive to entrepreneurship and business growth; a history of investments in research and development; universal compulsory school attendance; and freedom to pursue any level of education or type of job one, America has indeed been a place where hard work can lead to great wealth.

However, there are segments of our society that have not been able to prosper in a prosperous land. These include:

- **The Underemployed:** The underemployed have traditionally been defined as employed persons who want, and are available for, more hours of work than they currently have. We are expanding the concept to include employed persons who work full time, but earn below what would be expected for their education and ability level. Bachelor degree holders working at jobs that only require a high school diploma are an example.
- **Low-Wage Workers:** Low-wage workers include the working poor. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 7.7 million people were classified as working poor in 2005. The rate was higher for women than men and higher for blacks and Hispanics than whites and Asians. However, the term “working poor” does not begin to describe the extent of the problem, since individuals may be above the federal poverty level and still not be self-sufficient. These individuals may be underemployed, but may also be individuals who are employed as best as possible with their current education and skills level, except that level is insufficient to achieve a middle class income. While there are many highly educated individuals in the state, **there are far too many adults who are not able to participate effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.** Many residents lack English language skills and/or strong foundation skills that would allow them to be trained to fill shortages in middle-skill jobs. Low skills and low incomes

**“Vargas, 40, is a college graduate. Her résumé lists experience as a corporate manager, an assistant bank manager and a loan officer. She is fluent in three languages: English, German and her native Croatian. She also can “get by” in Italian, which she mentioned to one of the store clerks at the Garden City shopping mall when she was inquiring about job openings.**

**“The law of supply and demand is against people such as Vargas, according to The Conference Board, a research organization in Washington. In October, 5.6 million more people were looking for jobs in the United States than there were online advertised vacancies. The largest declines in online job offerings were in business, financial and management occupations.”**

**“Jobless: 53,100 Rhode Islanders Are Out of Work, Hundreds Pack Employment Fair,” *The Providence Journal*. 12-22-08**



plague some population groups more than others, leading to inequality in prosperity. Over the past decade, the percent of working-age adults enrolled part time in college has declined, and the decline has been greater than that of the nation.

In Rhode Island, jobs where the minimum educational requirement is an associate degree or higher accounted for **26.4 percent** of 2006 employment. In 2007, **37.3 percent** of the state's population 25 years and older in 2006 possessed an associate degree or higher. If anything, the population would appear to be over-educated for the jobs that exist!



Rhode Island is **above the national average in educational attainment**. It surpasses the nation in the percentage of individuals with bachelor's and advanced degrees, the percent of associate degrees conferred per 20-year-old resident, and the percent of bachelor's degrees conferred per 22-year-old resident, and percent of graduate degrees conferred per 24-, 25- and 29-year-old residents. A relatively high percentage of working-age adults are enrolled part-time in college.

Educational Attainment Adults 25 and Older - 2007	Rhode Island	United States
High school graduate, equivalent or higher	83.0%	84.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	29.8%	27.5%
Advanced degree	11.8%	10.1%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey		

The above chart reflects *all* adults 25 and older, even if they are out of the workforce or retired. However, Rhode Island also confers more postsecondary degrees per young adult than the national average.

Degrees Conferred - 2004	Rhode Island	United States
Associate degrees conferred per 20-year-old resident	24.7%	16.7%
Bachelor's degrees conferred per 22-year-old resident	29.0%	15.8%
Graduate degrees conferred per 24-, 25-, and 29-year-old resident	5.6%	5.3%
Technologist and Technician Degrees as a percentage of associate and postsecondary vocational	5.0%	5.5%
Source: The Entrepreneurship Score Card: Edward Lowe Foundation		

These degreed individuals do not necessarily stay in Rhode Island. Rhode Island suffers a **net out-migration** of young, single and college-education residents. Over the period from 1995 to 2000, Rhode Island was the destination of 6,500 young, single, college-educated adults. But during the same period, the state experienced an out-migration of 10,751 young, single, college-educated residents for a net loss of 4,225. The Rhode Island Economic Policy Council's research found that the college-educated are attracted to places that are perceived to be full of

life; diverse and distinctive; transit and digitally connected; and water- and energy-efficient. Research indicates that Rhode Island tends to attract young adults, ages 25 to 34, seeking opportunity and an improved quality of life.

There may be many **underemployed** individuals in the state whose skills could be “retooled.” Rhode Island was in the bottom half of the nation in 2004 in the percent of associate degrees and postsecondary vocational awards earned in technology and technician fields. Technical degrees are vitally important because careers in those areas are predicted to grow exponentially across the entire U.S.

Nearly one-third (32.9%) of new job growth projected for the decade 2006-2016 is expected to occur among jobs requiring an associate’s degree or higher, while over half (53.5%) is expected to occur among jobs requiring on-the-job training. Increasing the number of people with two year degrees and higher is unlikely to resolve Rhode Island’s human capital issues if the skills gained are not the *right skills* needed by the economy. While the largest number of new jobs is predicated to be in food preparation and serving (which is not uncommon in any growing economy), there are also projected to be large numeric increases in occupations that require strong math, science and technical skills. These include management occupations; business and financial operations; computer and mathematical; education, training and library; and healthcare practitioners.

While jobs such as waiters and waitresses, cashiers, food preparation workers, counter attendants, laborers, bartenders, cooks and dishwashers will always exist, it is essential that workers have options and pathways to better jobs. Strategies should include targeting these individuals who have a demonstrated work ethic to help them develop skills and build assets toward greater self-sufficiency.

News reports frequently bemoan the disappearance of the middle class. However, it is not so much that the middle class jobs are disappearing as it is that the education and skills needed for those jobs have changed. While skill demands have increased, our expectations have not. “America’s Forgotten Middle Skill Jobs” (Holzer & Lerman, November 2007) points out that about half of all employment today is still in the middle-skill occupations; that nearly half of all job openings up to the year 2014 will be in middle-skill occupations; and that the demand for workers to fill those jobs is likely to remain robust relative to supply. The chart on the following page illustrates that in 2004 Rhode Island’s share of jobs in middle skill occupations approximates 48 percent. However, only 42 percent of workers likely have the appropriate training for these jobs. If unaddressed, this holds true through 2014.

The Rhode Island Economic Policy Council noted correctly in a discussion paper prepared for a 2007 Education and Workforce Roundtable that the right skills include expert thinking, complex communication, learn-on-demand, interdisciplinary design, and mobility skills. Such skills are unlikely to be required for No Child Left Behind purposes, or even taught and assessed at the college level. It isn’t so much the degree as the skills that must be aligned with high wage work.

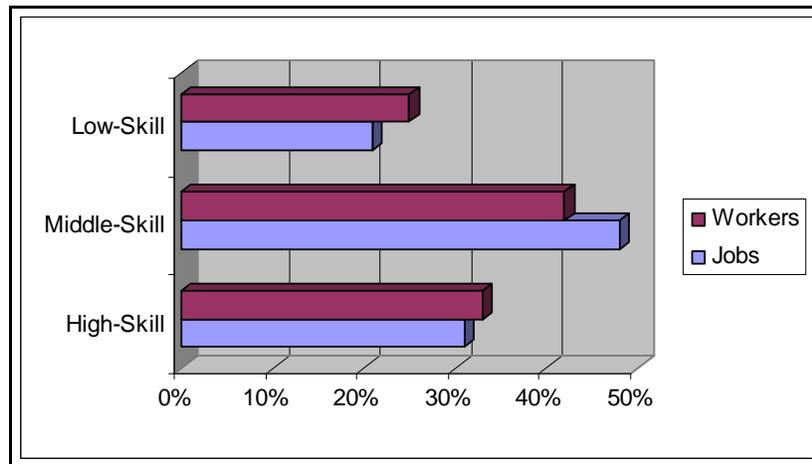
Economists Richard Murnane from Harvard and Frank Levy from Massachusetts Institute of Technology outlined what they believe to be the new “basic skills” in the workplace:

- The ability to read at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level;
- Mastery of fractions, decimals, and line graphs;
- The ability to solve semi-structured problems in which the hypotheses must be formed and tested;
- The ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing;
- The ability to work in groups with people of various backgrounds;
- The ability to use personal computers to carry out simple tasks like word processing.

They added, “Many high wage employers demand substantially greater skills from job applicants. But almost no high-wage employer today demands less.”



## Rhode Island's Jobs and Workers by Skill Level, 2004

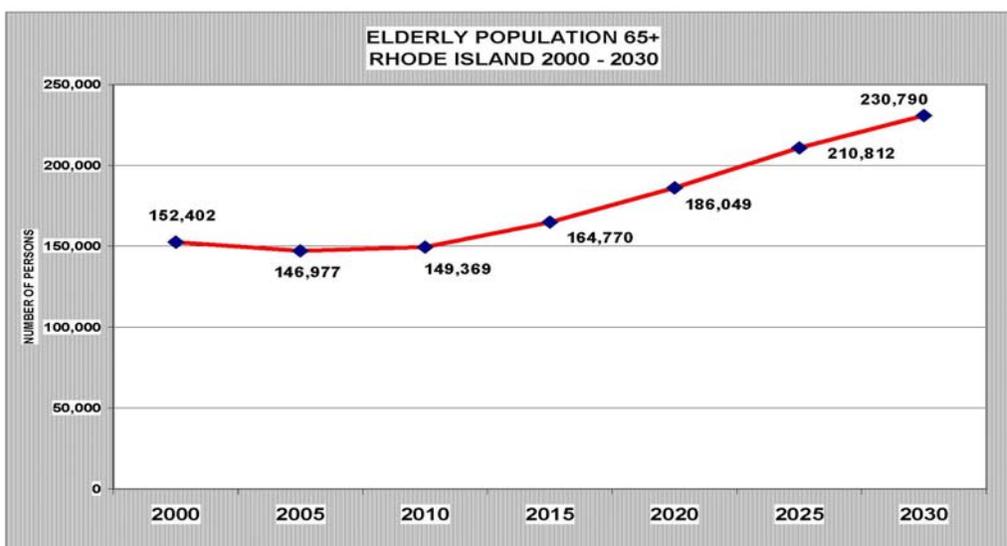


SOURCE: [www.Skills2Compete.org](http://www.Skills2Compete.org)

Between out-migration of the young and low population growth, **the Rhode Island workforce is quickly aging**, even faster than the national average rate. All of New England is growing in population far more slowly than the US average. Rhode Island grew by only 1.8 percent in this decade compared to 6.4 percent nationally. Its population is only expected to grow at a very modest pace through the year 2030, with five year growth rates averaging between 1.1 percent and 1.8 percent. (There is expected to be a 10.7 percent growth rate in employment from 2004-2014.).

New England is also older than the nation, with a median age of 38.4 compared to the national average of 36.4. Nationally, **Rhode Island ranks 13<sup>th</sup> among states with the oldest population**. It is in seventh place nationally for the percent of the population 65 years and older, and tied with Connecticut and Massachusetts for fourth in the nation in the percent of the population 85 years and older. Within the next quarter century, Rhode Island will witness an astounding 53 percent increase in its elderly (65+) population. Conversely, the under-65 population will increase by a mere one percent.

[planning.ri.gov](http://planning.ri.gov)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
RI Statewide Planning

PP/ELDERLY 65+ #



Data from the 2000 Census tells us that persons 65 and older represent 14.5 percent of the state's total population, or approximately one in every seven people. By 2030, the elderly will represent more than 20 percent, or one in every five people. This trend will place continuing demands on jobs in health care and eldercare.

Many workers who have developed skills over a lifetime are close to retiring and are taking those skills with them. Local Employment Dynamics data from the U.S. Census shows the leading industries that employ workers age 65 and over in Rhode Island are health care and social assistance (2,600), retail (2,400), manufacturing (2,200) and education (2,000); therefore, these industries may be more "at risk" of losing experience and talent.

The Labor Market Information Division of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training notes that "...new workers will be needed to fill an average of more than 17,100 jobs per year due to the combination of new jobs (5,400 per year) created through economic growth and the need to replace existing workers who leave their jobs (11,700 per year) for retirement and other reasons (Rhode Department of Labor and Training, 2007)."



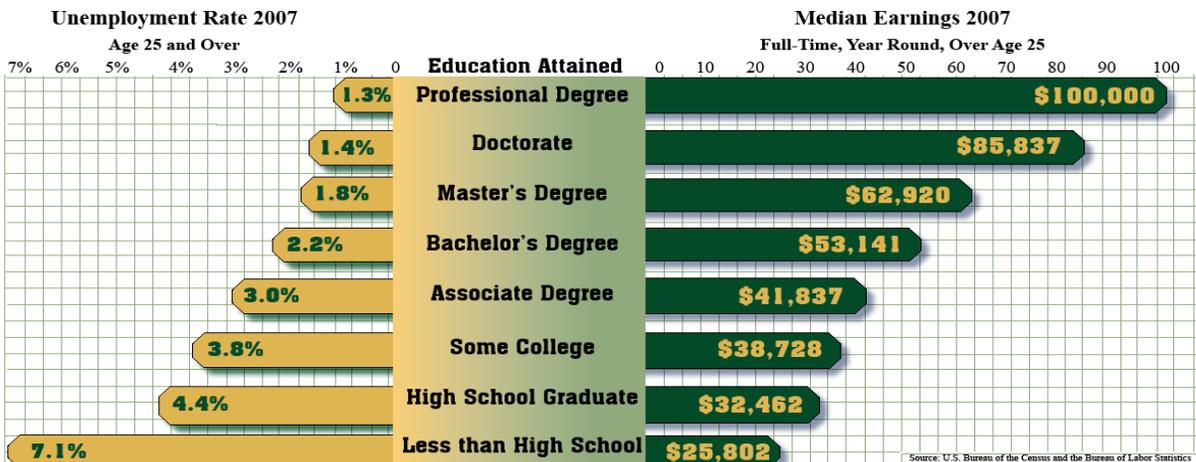
Nationally, 60 percent of the jobs being created require skills that only 20 percent of the workforce possesses. We face a dilemma: large numbers of people are losing their jobs and are unemployed, yet many employers report that they still cannot find qualified employees. Rhode Island ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in the percentage of associate degrees and postsecondary vocational certificates earned in technologist and technician areas, which is troubling since careers in the technical fields are projected to grow exponentially across the country. Many people are not self-sufficient, while many high-wage jobs can't be filled. Unfilled high paying jobs cost the economy millions of dollars. Closing the degree attainment gap could add \$230 billion in national wealth per year. States that succeed in aligning supply with demand will be most competitive in attracting, retaining and growing their competitive advantage nationally and globally.

A high school degree is no longer sufficient to compete in an evolving labor market. What's more, the notion that education begins at age five and ends at age 18 is an outdated perspective that sends a dangerous message about the adequacy of a post-World War II era concept of knowledge and skill development.

There is a growing body of research illustrating the significant effect of educational attainment on income levels, and the pathways created through education to secure, high-paying jobs. In other words, the more you learn, the more you earn. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the likelihood of higher earnings and steady employment increases as educational attainment increases. The individual who has a bachelor's degree is more likely to be employed and can earn on average 60 percent more than a person who has only a high school diploma.

As illustrated in the following chart, the difference in earnings between individuals with a high school diploma and those with a bachelor's degree is over \$20,000 annually.





Individuals who are currently employed (incumbent workers) in high-wage jobs are at risk of losing those jobs as industries, occupations and technology change. And, there are many individuals in low-skill jobs who need training to advance, but who face obstacles to working full time while participating in training. Rhode Island is ahead of its neighbors in terms of adult education and training, with 4.5 percent of its working-age adults enrolled in postsecondary education (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006). In 2006, the National Report Card on Higher Education gave Rhode Island an “A” for postsecondary participation, noting that a high percentage of working-age adults enroll part-time in college, but “over the past decade, this percentage has declined, greater than that of the nation as a whole.” Strategies should include incentives applied to both the supply and demand side of the equation to increase the number of people participating in lifelong learning.

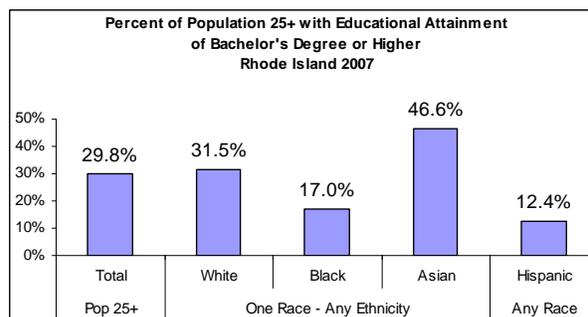
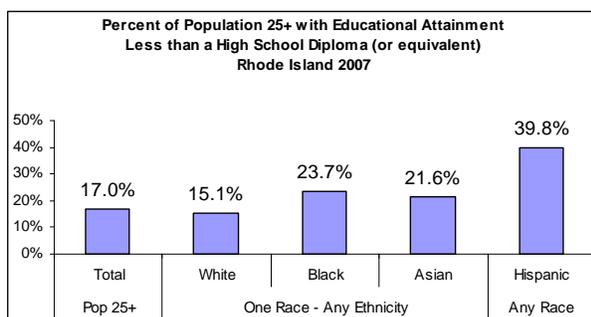
There are skill development gaps that are unique to various population segments as well as skill gaps that are applicable across the entire population. Some of the population segments overlap.



**Ethnic Minorities:** Over 11 percent (11.2%) of Rhode Island’s population in 2007 claimed Hispanic ethnicity, which is more than double the percentage reported in the 1990 census. Given the fact that this segment of the population is likely to comprise an ever-increasing share of the workforce, Hispanic participation in education and training will have a strong impact on the quality of the future workforce. However, nearly 40 percent (39.8%) of Hispanics lack a high school diploma compared to 17.0 percent of the total population, and only 12.4 percent of Hispanics have attained a bachelor’s degree or above

compared to 29.8 percent for all Rhode Islanders. The National Report Card on Higher Education noted that there is a gap in Rhode Island between whites and Hispanics in the proportion of students completing certificates and degrees relative to the number enrolled. The state’s modest population growth is being driven by immigrants who have lower educational attainment levels and are less likely to complete college even after they are enrolled. States that find the best ways to engage Hispanic residents in higher education will be the most competitive.

There are many factors that impact educational persistence among this group, including cultural, linguistic and financial factors. Strategies must include engaging the Hispanic and other immigrant communities to identify and overcome barriers.



**High School Dropouts:** The lifetime earnings of high school dropouts are significantly below those with higher-level education. Clearly, there are economic impacts to the state as a whole when young people do not persist in high school.

From 2000 to 2005, dropout rates fell both nationally and in the region. The rate in Rhode Island declined from 10 percent to 9 percent. However, Rhode Island's national ranking went from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> because it is not making the same level of improvement in retaining youth in school as the rest of the country.

### Teens Who Are High School Dropouts

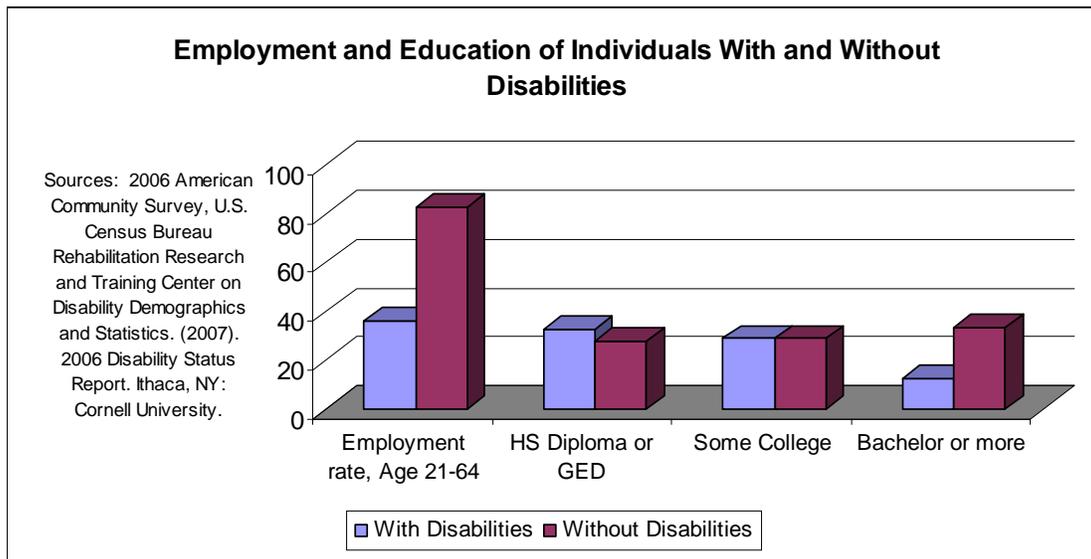
	2000		2005	
	Percent	National Rank	Percent	National Rank
Rhode Island	10%	22	9%	27
United States	11%	--	7%	--

Source: The Anne E. Casey Foundation

Rhode Island earned a C+ on the National Report Card on Higher Education's Preparation Index. The Report Card states, "Rhode Island's underperformance in preparing students for college could limit the state's access to a competitive workforce and weaken its economy over time. In comparison to the early 1990's, a smaller proportion of ninth graders graduate from high school in four years."

Strategies must include alternatives to traditional educational approaches. If children cannot learn the way we teach, then we must teach them the way they learn.

**Individuals with Disabilities:** As shown in the table below, individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island have significantly lower employment among people of working age (21-64), despite the fact that their educational attainment is not dramatically lower. In 2006, about 83,000 of the state's working-age individuals reported one or more disabilities. Unemployed individuals with disabilities represent a large source of untapped potential. Engaging them more fully in the workforce would benefit the individuals as well as employers and reduce the strain on social networks and systems.



However, there are many barriers which must be addressed. A major barrier individuals with disabilities share with many non-disabled workers is comprehensive and affordable health care. Private insurance either does not provide enough coverage or the insurance is cost prohibitive.

Individuals with disabilities could be more fully engaged in the workforce if 1) there were better communication and coordination among the various service entities that work with this population; 2) staff and participants better understood the complex system of work incentives; 3) eligibility criteria for Rhode Island Medicaid was expanded; 4) there were more transportation options and services available; and 5) employers were better educated about the needs of and resources available to disabled workers.

**Males:** The high school graduation rate for Rhode Island males in 2003-2004 was 66 percent compared to 74.8 percent for females (*Education Week*, 12 June 2007). And, women in the core working-age population groups of 25-34 years and 35-44 years were more likely than men to have a bachelor's degree or higher. The social impacts of differences in potential earning power are likely to be as problematic as economic impacts.

**Low Skilled Adults:** In addition to the immigrant population, there are large numbers of adults in the Rhode Island workforce who lack fundamental skills needed for high-skilled jobs. The Rhode Island Economic Policy Council points to the "legacy workforce from our former industrial economy," and encourages investing in adult education to turn dependents into tax payers. "It is, in fact, not an expense, but an *investment* that produces returns in the form of increased tax revenue and reduced social services costs." Strategies should include combining adult education with skill training rather than treating them as separate, sequenced activities.

**Public Assistance Recipients:** A source of human capital that could be developed is the population that is receiving public assistance. In 2006, a little over half (51%) of parents participating in the Family Independence Program reported that their educational attainment



level was 12<sup>th</sup> grade or higher. Seventy-nine percent (79%) reported English as their primary language. If social barriers can be overcome, these individuals represent untapped potential. However, the Governor's Office reports that Rhode Island families receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) payments longer than families in any other state in the nation. The national average was 21.9 months; Rhode Island families stayed on for 38.5 months. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ranked Rhode Island 41st in the nation at getting TANF recipients back to work.

In Rhode Island, every resident is a critical resource that can contribute to the state's prosperity. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

### **Existing Efforts**

- The Governor's Workforce Board has made significant investments in adult education and literacy services. To date, \$13.5 million has been invested to provide services to 8,281 learners.
- In addition to programs, the board has partnered with the Rhode Island Department of Education to fund three innovative initiatives designed to foster collaboration and system reform. Literacy services, including online GED and basic skills remediation were incorporated into the one-stop centers. Funding also enabled the startup of a professional development center at Rhode Island College, designed to offer on-going developmental services to the state's adult education service agencies. Lastly, an interagency demonstration project on Aquidneck Island, entitled the Newport Skills Alliance, was launched in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Community College of Rhode Island, United Way, the Department of Labor and Training and the Rhode Island Foundation as well as a number of businesses. The project has become a model of regional workforce and economic impact.
- There is a concerted effort to improve literacy and numeracy. The state is bringing all agencies funding literacy programs together in a coordinated effort to deal with improving language, reading and writing skills for adults.
- The Governor's Workforce Board has funded two models to improve and add value to the service delivery system. First, occupational training coupled with English language training is being developed to meet the needs of non-English speaking dislocated workers. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training is funding training for Trade Adjustment Assistance eligible workers, while funding from the Board allows the training to be extended to ineligible dislocated workers. The second model is the Industry Skills Development Initiative, a partnership effort of the state's two local workforce investment boards. The initiative will allow the boards and their local partners to align training resources and services with the short- and long-term labor market needs of high-growth, high-wage industries.
- Initiatives have been launched to add training programs at state colleges aimed at meeting the needs of jobs emerging in Rhode Island's new economy such as chemical manufacturing.
- There is a renewed emphasis in the one-stop system for on-the-job training and customized training with strong linkages to the employer to ensure the *right* skills are delivered.
- There is a coordinated effort among the state's workforce investment system, the community college and employers to provide employer-based curricula leading to specific jobs. This has occurred most notably in the welding programs serving the ship building industry. This model could be expanded to other major industry clusters such as healthcare, hospitality and construction.



- *Skill Up Rhode Island* is a community impact initiative that invests in the development and enhancement of partnerships to meet the needs of low-skilled adult Rhode Islanders and the employers who hire them. A project of the United Way of Rhode Island, the initiative supports the development of highly networked public and community partnerships among employers, education, training and support services providers to facilitate the creation of career opportunities and a stable workforce. As a result of this initiative, low-income, unemployed or underemployed Rhode Island residents will receive pre-employment services that address such areas as: reading, writing, and verbal skills; math literacy; English language proficiency; and problem-solving.

## Objectives and Menu of Strategies

**Objective 3.1. – Increase Employment Rates of Special Populations.** *Beginning with 2010 as the baseline year, increase every year the employment rate of Rhode Islanders who face significant barriers to employment, such as those with disabilities, ex-offenders and other special populations.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.1.1 Incorporate the knowledge, expertise and experience of the Rhode Island State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to the workforce development investment system.
- 3.1.2 Work collaboratively with netWORKri and Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) to educate community organizations, such as those serving adults with disabilities,\* about the employment resources available through the One-Stop System in Rhode Island.

**Objective 3.2 – Increase Workforce Attachment.** *Increase workforce attachment (staying power to a job) for minimum-skilled, low-wage individuals.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.2.1 Establish a systematic approach to eliminate the barriers and provide supports for minimum-skilled, low-wage individuals, including those with limited abilities to maintain attachment to the workforce.

**Objective 3.3 – Increase Workforce Mobility.** *Increase the number of workers that transition from unemployment, to entry-level jobs, to middle-skill jobs, to high-skill jobs as demonstrated by increased employment rates based on Unemployment Insurance wage records.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.3.1 Adopt a career pathway model that is transferable across industry sectors upon approval of this plan.
- 3.3.2 Implement ramp and bridge programs that integrate basic and occupational skills. Higher education is inaccessible to individuals who lack the foundational skills to succeed. Bridge programs have long been used to help low-skilled individuals transition from adult education to postsecondary education and careers, but there are many who lack even



the ability to participate in bridge programs. Ramp programs serve to help the lowest skilled adults get on the educational road to ultimate success. Because adults have themselves and often others to support, we must accelerate their travel on this road.

**Objective 3.4 – Increase Skill Attainment Rate.** *Increase the number of adults with significant barriers to employment (including those with disabilities, the incarcerated, welfare recipients and adults with limited English proficiency) that are able to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the changing economic demands of our state and to assure the opportunity of their participation in the workforce, for their own benefit and the prosperity of the state.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.4.1 Utilize the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and its team of professionally trained and qualified counselors to offer evaluation and assessment, vocational counseling and guidance, job development and placement, and support to assist people with disabilities to go to work.
- 3.4.2 Develop a marketing strategy to increase the awareness of RI's employers about the benefits and financial incentives for hiring people with disabilities.\*
- 3.4.3 Work collaboratively with netWORKri and ORS to educate community organizations serving adults with disabilities\* about the employment resources available through the One-Stop System in Rhode Island.

**Objective 3.5 – Increase Credential Rates.** *Increase the number of postsecondary and industry credentials.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.5.1 Conduct an inventory of existing credentials to determine where gaps might exist and what draft credentials could be created.
- 3.5.2 Increase the number of options, including credentialed and virtual training, available on the Eligible Training Provider List.
- 3.5.3 Increase the number of adult learners who establish a goal to continue their education at the postsecondary level and who entered postsecondary education or training after program exit.
- 3.5.4 Develop jointly with post secondary institutions an institutional model for improving access to financial and academic supports for adult learners.
- 3.5.5 Increase the accessibility of postsecondary education for working adults.

**Objective 3.6 – Increase Participation in Adult Education.** *Increase the number of participants in adult education.*

### Strategy Menu

- 3.6.1 Align the workforce development system with the adult education system (cross-referral/capacity).



- 3.6.2 Expand and diversify funding for adult education services to reach a total investment of \$25 million.
- 3.6.3 Expand Welcome Back Center service capacity to other sectors and double service levels and outcomes.
- 3.6.4 Refine student leadership and engagement model to engage at least 100 students or alumni on an ongoing basis in adult education system improvement efforts.
- 3.6.5 Develop and implement a recruitment strategy and create instructional guidance for working with adults with disabilities.\*
- 3.6.7 Alter system's funding mix to ensure that at least 50 percent of all adult education resources go toward programs that integrate adult education, training and wrap-around support services in support of career pathways in critical sectors.
- 3.6.8 Increase recruitment strategy for referring veterans incorporating Government Issue (G.I.) benefits and other programs.

**Objective 3.7 – Integrate Basic Skills Training with Occupational Skills Training.**  
*Build capacity for contextualized learning for ABE, GED and ESL integrated with occupational skills training.*

#### **Strategy Menu**

- 3.7.1 Create and support innovative programs that allow for credit work experience, dual enrollment in ABE and postsecondary/training.
- 3.7.2 Develop and support at minimum one pilot dual enrollment program in each adult education network.

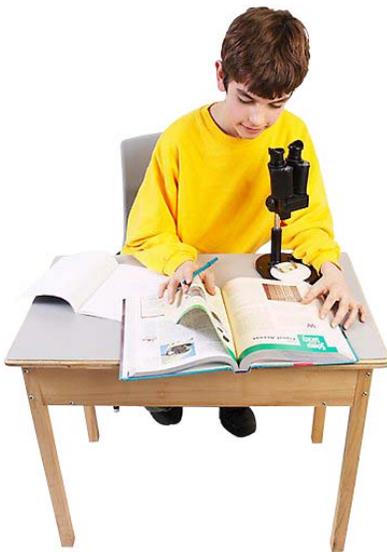


## **Goal 4: Youth Are Ready for Work and Lifelong Learning.**

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**Youth will be made more aware of skill development opportunities in order to take better advantage of those which enable them to meet changing workforce demand – for their own and for the state's future prosperity.**

The world is not easy for today's young people. Today's students may be preparing themselves for occupations that will cease to exist within the next 10-15 years. Skills learned by a student as a freshman may be outdated by the time he or she graduates. Learners 20 years ago would never have thought there would someday be college degrees in fields such as nanotechnology, organic agriculture, e-business or new media. What will there be 20 years from now, when today's toddlers enter the job market? Occupations will be created that no one can currently foresee, yet today's secondary students must be ready for them. Today's learners are predicted to have held 10-14 jobs by age 38. To say young people must be flexible and agile in the marketplace is without question. We cannot simply counsel our youth on the careers that exist today or even on those that we predict will exist five years from now.



While we may not know what the jobs will be, we do know that all youth must have solid foundation skills so that they can keep learning throughout their lifetimes. We know that they must be able to transfer not just between jobs, but between careers, and not just once, but possibly many times during their working lives. We know that occupational certificates and degrees will still be important, but critical thinking skills, analytical skills, problem identification, negotiation, interpersonal skills and others will be increasingly important to labor market agility.

In this highly competitive global economy, Rhode Island's students are not taking enough rigorous courses. Low income youth perform exceptionally poorly in math, and Rhode Island was one of only five states to decline on measures of math proficiency among low income eighth graders over the past nine years. Thirty-five percent (35%) of all eighth graders scored below basic math level in 2007 (the national average was 30%). Eleven percent (11%) of Rhode Island's youth ages 18 to 24 are not presently enrolled in school, are not currently working and have no degree beyond a high school diploma or GED. These young adults are considered having difficulty navigating a successful transition to adulthood. Seven percent (7%) of teenagers between age 16 and 19 are not enrolled in school, full- or part-time, and not employed, full- or part-time (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006). While better than the national averages, these figures still represent a tremendous waste of potential.

Rhode Island earned a C+ on the National Report Card on Higher Education's Preparation Index. The Report Card says, "Rhode Island's underperformance in preparing students for college could limit the state's access to a competitive workforce and weaken its economy over time. In comparison to the early 1990's, a smaller proportion of ninth graders graduate from high school in four years."

All our young people are at-risk of being left behind in the innovation economy if they fail to learn the new basic skills. All young people need opportunities to develop these skills. The emerging workforce is also hampered by lack of agreement on what it means to be ready for college or work. Unlike 21 other states, Rhode Island's K-12 system has no definition of work readiness. Unlike 11 other states, Rhode Island has no definition of college readiness (which



may explain high rates of remedial education among community college students). And, unfortunately, the states that have defined college readiness typically base the definition on courses students must take in high school rather than on definitions of knowledge and skills. By focusing on knowledge and skills, Rhode Island could take a bold lead in redefining college readiness (*Education Week*, 4 January 2007).

Rhode Island's youth are slightly more likely to be in poverty than in the U.S. as a whole; 19.5 percent of all youth under the age of 18 were living in poverty in Rhode Island in 2005, compared to 18.5 percent nationally. Children from poverty are more likely to have a parent with less than a high school education, more likely to have a parent whose primary language is not English, more likely to come to school malnourished, and more likely to have academic and behavioral problems. Their chances for future success are considerably reduced. And, they are less likely to be able to afford a postsecondary education compared to their national counterparts.

In Rhode Island, college costs for low- and middle-income students to attend community college represent 45 percent of their annual family income, and if they attend public four-year institutions, 58 percent. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education says the state "makes a very low investment in need-based financial aid compared with top-performing states, and Rhode Island offers no low-tuition college opportunities." The Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) agrees. In its annual Assets and Opportunities Scorecard, CFED cited Rhode Island as substandard in college financial aid.

There are many youth ages 16 to 24 who are not working, not in school and have no high school diploma or education beyond high school. We need to be able to identify and capture this lost human capital. With labor shortages looming, young people must find their productive place in society before they turn 25. Because Rhode Island is a small state, the numbers of "lost youth" are not staggering, but that makes the problem all the more manageable, and our failure to address it all the more inexcusable.

## Existing Efforts

- The Governor's Workforce Board has invested nearly \$9 million and has leveraged an additional \$16 million for a total of more than \$25 million invested in the Youth Workforce Development System, which has served more than 8,200 youth to date.
- Both local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) created Youth Centers in the Providence and Pawtucket netWORKri offices and are in the process of developing several more spanning from Woonsocket to Westerly.
- Both local workforce investment boards have undertaken a redesign of their service strategies, particularly with regard to older youth services. The focus for this population was shifted to occupational skill training through the Individual Training Account process.
- The Governor has established a PK-16 Council that seeks to align education initiatives and reform with workforce and economic development strategies. The Council has been charged with:
  - ◆ Creating an action plan to improve math and science results.
  - ◆ Changing how high school science is taught.
  - ◆ Developing new ways to teach algebra (I Can Learn Pilot Program).
  - ◆ Providing for math and science specialists.
  - ◆ Establishing statewide math and science curricula.
  - ◆ Requiring more science courses to get a high school diploma.



- ◆ Allowing math and science professionals to teach part-time.
  - ◆ Creating alternative teaching certifications for professionals.
  - ◆ Infusing real-world applications in science teaching.
  - ◆ Incorporating technology into teacher preparation.
  - ◆ Further strengthening the sciences at the postsecondary level.
  - ◆ Establishing a PK-16 policy board to ensure student success.
- The Governor's Children's Cabinet, a collaboration of all state agencies that provide services to youth, meets regularly to address health, safety, educational, developmental and family issues impacting youth.
  - Rhode Island's Shared Youth Vision State Team, consisting of representatives from the Departments of Labor and Training, Education, Children Youth and Families, Human Services and Justice/Corrections, as well as representatives from both local workforce investment boards, meets to examine current operational processes of the workforce system and to formulate a strategic response to serve Rhode Island's neediest youth. Those agencies serving youth in Rhode Island will position themselves as strategic partners in the development and delivery of services to the emerging workforce.
  - An "all youth" approach has been implemented within the state's one-stop system. Rhode Island sought and obtained a waiver to allow the state to provide three of the ten youth elements without competitively procuring services from an outside vendor. In order to implement this new approach, the GWB, the Office of Adult Education, and the two local workforce investment boards collaborated in an innovative process resulting in a unified Request for Proposal (RFP) that would provide services on a statewide basis using both federal and State funds. The commitment to undertake a combined RFP with these other agencies, attracted new resources to the youth initiative.
  - The state introduced a mastery-based math program for all students in the Lincoln School District as a prototype. This initiative is in conformity with the Governor's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Initiative (STEM). The curriculum is designed to allow students whose learning styles and paces vary widely to receive the same high-quality education. This mastery-based math program delivers lesson presentations, assigns homework, grades tests, takes attendance, but most importantly, charts student progress to provide individualized real-time assessment. Funds from the Governor's WIA set-aside reserve have been committed in the amount of \$200,000. This program involves the collaboration of the Rhode Department of Education, Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island, the Lincoln School District and Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. This project is being evaluated over a three-year period to determine replication in other school districts throughout the State.
  - The Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) has articulation agreements with all Project Lead the Way (PLTW) high schools in the state. High school students who successfully complete the PLTW courses with a "C" or better grade are eligible for advanced standing in the CCRI's Engineering Technology programs and may be awarded up to seven credits for CCRI courses.



## Objectives and Menu of Strategies

**Objective 4.1 – Increase Access to Work-Preparedness Activities.** *Increase the number of youth who have access to and participate in work-preparedness activities.*

### Strategy Menu

- 4.1.1 Expand the number of youth connected to the youth workforce development system by allowing organizations such as CBOs and FBOs and local education agencies to link to the system through the provision of their core competencies.
- 4.1.2 Ensure that 50 percent of the youth connected to the youth workforce development system engage in work experiences, internships or part-time job opportunities and that 30 percent of those served will move into postsecondary opportunities such as short-term certified training, apprenticeships or postsecondary schooling.

**Objective 4.2 – Decrease Postsecondary Remediation Rates.** *Increase the number of youth, who upon high school graduation, can immediately enter postsecondary courses, institutions, and programs without remediation and/or can enter the workforce (already possessing the necessary work-readiness skills).*

### Strategy Menu

- 4.2.1 Increase the number of youth engaged in work-based learning.
- 4.2.2 Embed and regulate workforce development standards in the RIDE high school content standards and provide a framework to help schools succeed.
- 4.2.3 Expose all K-12 students to the world of work through career awareness programs provided at each grade level.
- 4.2.4 Increase the number, diversity and quality of high school-level academic, technical and career-focused programs of study in order to serve the substantial majority of students who could benefit from such options.
- 4.2.5 Increase the percentage of youth who can immediately enter for-credit postsecondary courses without remediation.
- 4.2.6 Expand bridge programming that promotes more students going on to postsecondary education, such as dual enrollment activity and apprenticeship.
- 4.2.7 Allow students engaged in approved out-of-school work-based learning programs to count this activity toward their high school graduation requirements.
- 4.2.8 Require that all CTE students meet all high school graduation and college-ready requirements in order to be awarded their CTE skill certificate.
- 4.2.9 Ensure that workforce training programs provided to incarcerated youth are consistent with the statewide educational standards.

**Objective 4.3 – Increase the Capacity of Youth-Serving Organizations.** *Increase the capacity of all youth-serving state agencies to support at-risk youth and youth with disabilities\* in their ability to have a productive work life.*



## Strategy Menu

- 4.3.1 Increase the opportunities for special needs youth and youth with disabilities\* to have access to work preparedness activities prior to graduation from high school.
- 4.3.2 Increase the number of Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) involved youth and youthful offenders who are served by each Youth Center.
- 4.3.3 Establish a Youth Center at the Rhode Island Training School and at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (DOC).
- 4.3.4 Establish a baseline as to the percentage of DCYF involved youth and youthful offenders who are attending school full time and/or are engaged in meaningful full time employment.
- 4.3.5 Improve rehabilitation services in a manner that increases employment outcomes for youth through better understanding of business needs and matching consumer interests, abilities and skills.
- 4.3.6 Link the youth workforce development system with proven mentoring programs that connect at-risk youth with caring adults.
- 4.3.7 Identify and re-engage at-risk youth in education and work-based learning.

**Objective 4.4 – Increase Youth Participation in Apprenticeships.** *Increase the number of youth enrolled in labor-sponsored and other apprenticeship programs.*

## Strategy Menu

- 4.4.1 Embed an apprenticeship track in the high schools allowing for programs of study to begin in the ninth grade so that students graduate high school having completed all course work and labor hours, allowing for the transition into full-time employment post graduation.
- 4.4.2 Support outreach and demonstration projects that foster the increase of youth enrollment in apprenticeship programs.

**Objective 4.5 – Increase Youth with Credentials.** *Increase the number of youth with a high school credential or diploma.*

## Strategy Menu

- 4.5.1 Partner with the Rhode Island Department of Education to leverage funding and ensure all RI Youth Centers offer GED courses.
- 4.5.2 Increase the number of youth remaining in and graduating from high school by creating alternative and innovative pathways for youth to obtain traditional credits (e.g. virtual learning).
- 4.5.3 Increase the number of alternative learning programs that address non-traditional learners and provide more experiential learning.
- 4.5.4 Increase the number, diversity and quality of career and technical education programs in order to serve the substantial majority of high school students who would benefit from such programs.



- 4.5.5 Institute Industry-Recognized certificates for all career and technical education programs.

**Objective 4.6 – Increase Educator Understanding of the Labor Market.** *Increase the number of educators in externships and expand their knowledge of resources available to support their understanding of workforce development and the contemporary labor market.*

**Strategy Menu**

- 4.6.1 Increase the utilization rate of labor market and workforce development resources available for teachers and guidance counselors. Examples include industry tours, netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers, placement agencies, youth centers and postsecondary career centers.
- 4.6.2 Establish incentives such as the use of continuing education credits that increase teacher participation in externships.



## **What Strengths Can We Leverage Moving into the Future?**

Rhode Island is above average on many fronts and has strengths to leverage going into the New Economy. CFED's 2005 Developmental Report Card for the States awarded Rhode Island an A on the Performance Index (as measured by employment, earnings and job quality, equity, quality of life and resource efficiency).

Additionally, Rhode Island has great potential and has made great strides according to the Milken Institute's State Technology and Science Index 2004, which recently ranked Rhode Island in 11<sup>th</sup> place, a dramatic improvement from its 2002 rank of 21<sup>st</sup>. The index is composed of five major composites (Research and Development Inputs, Risk Capital and Infrastructure, Human Capital Investment, Technology and Science Workforce, and Technology Concentration and Dynamism) designed to provide an inventory of science and technology assets that can be leveraged to promote economic development. There are 75 individual indicators that go into the five major categories. Rhode Island's strengths were in Research and Developmental Inputs and Risk Capital and Infrastructure.

The state earned a B- on Overall Entrepreneurial Dynamism from the Entrepreneurship Score Card. It ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the percent of adults with bachelor's degrees, and 11<sup>th</sup> in graduate degrees. It ranks second in the nation in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred per 22-year-old resident.

The economic situation may get tougher before it gets better, but it is sure not to improve if the workforce lacks the skills to take advantage of new opportunities.

### ***Conclusion and Next Steps***

In his 2008 State of the State address, Governor Carcieri stated that "The state of the state is at a tipping point.... If we are not willing to make the hard choices, then the tipping point will lean to the side of disaster, and we will have failed the people who sent us to serve them." While the state faces formidable challenges on a number of fronts, the willingness of the entire workforce development system to harness the talent and invest in human capital will help to ensure a bright and prosperous future for all Rhode Islanders. One thing is certain – doing nothing and relying on what has always been done to sustain our prosperity is not an option.

The most important next step is to set an operational plan in motion that prioritizes strategies, and outlines specifically *who* will do *what* by *when*. As part of a commitment to continuous improvement we will assess our progress annually and use the data to determine the need for different and/or additional strategies. The Governor's Workforce Board encourages all Rhode Island residents, employers, educators, economic developers, and workforce professionals to join with us on this journey to a more prosperous economy.



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