



Governor's Workforce Board RI
Rhode Island Department of Education
Rhode Island Department of Human Services
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

STATE PLAN 2016



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State of Rhode Island

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WIOA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rhode Island State workforce plan contains three strategies to improve workforce development efforts in RI. These strategies aim to ensure Rhode Island employers have the talent they need to continue to expand their operations while ensuring Rhode Islanders are equipped to take advantage of the employment opportunities available in the state. In addition, Rhode Island seeks to develop comprehensive performance measures to provide both output and outcome based data to inform the workforce development decision making process. The three strategies are as follows:

1. Implementing a demand-driven sector-based strategy to aggregate economic opportunities by employers and their intermediaries.
2. A career pathway strategy to provide employment, education, training and support services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, so they can improve their individual capacities and effectively compete in the labor market to achieve economic security for themselves and their families.
3. Develop an effective performance measurement strategy to track labor market interactions beyond federal reporting requirements.

An economic analysis of the state concluded Rhode Island economy is comprised of numerous sectors that collectively drive economic growth in the state. Of these numerous sectors, seven industry clusters were identified as the leading and potential leading economic drivers in the state. They are;

- Biomedical Innovation
- Information Technology/Software and cyber-physical systems/ Data Analytics
- Defense Shipbuilding and maritime
- Advanced business services
- Design, food, and custom manufacturing
- Transportation, distribution and logistics
- Arts, education, hospitality, and tourism
- Healthcare
- Construction

An analysis of the workforce development system of Rhode Island revealed that many strong initiatives are available in Rhode Island, however such initiatives are often unconnected and lack a coordinated focus. In response Rhode Island has chosen to use the opportunity provided by the WIOA combined planning process to implement a demand driven sector strategy full scale. Building on the successful piloted demand strategies already underway in the state, Rhode Island seeks to align the entire workforce development network to this demand driven strategy.

In doing so, Rhode Island workforce development partners will be better equipped to serve those Rhode Islanders in the greatest need. Using the actionable intelligence gathered through the sector strategy which uses workforce intermediaries to aggregate demand, the partnering

programs will be better poised to provide services in context with occupational attainment or advancement. Rhode Island's economy cannot afford to leave the talent of any citizen untapped and will implement a career pathway strategy that provides the client perspective to the demand strategy. The career pathway strategy aims to help individual citizens of the state become more competitive in the labor market and better able to obtain employment in the industries driving the state's economy.

STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

Rhode Island State Vision

Workforce development begins with understanding the demand for a workforce. The development of a workforce consists of many programs and investments, but collectively is meant to connect employers in need of labor for producing the goods and services that make up the economy to the individual workers who will supply such labor. Workforce development has a symbiotic relationship with economic development. Labor is a resource needed by all organizations and as an organization becomes more successful in trading their products or services, the need for labor as a resource increases.

As more organizations require labor and the competition among employers to attract talented workers increases, the economy grows. As the economy grows, so too must the workforce development efforts that ensure a sufficient labor market supply is available to meet the continued demand of employers. If workforce development efforts are unable to maintain employer access to an adequate supply of workers, employers are left with an insufficient resource of manpower which hinders, and in some cases reverses, their economic growth. If a pervasive workforce shortage exists, then the overall economic health of the state is jeopardized and opportunities available to Rhode Islanders shrink. To prevent this situation, workforce development efforts must be coordinated to bring out the talents of each Rhode Islander in a way that those talents match the demand generated by employers.

Therefore, the vision of Rhode Island is a state in which the talent of each Rhode Islander; including individuals with barriers is realized to increase the community capacity and the economic growth of Rhode Island. Robert Chaskin defined community capacity for the Urban Affairs Association's 1998 annual meeting as:

“the interaction of human, organizational and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of associations among them and between them and the broader systems of which the community is part.”

In order to maximize Rhode Island's community capacity, individuals have to be aware of the opportunities present, but they must also be cognizant of their own ability to seize those opportunities. These opportunities represent the options a person has to better their life and benefit their communities at large. The more people seize these opportunities, the more community capacity is generated. As community capacity expands, the more competitive a community becomes which increases the number of opportunities available to the community and its citizens. Markets grow when there is healthy competition forcing them to expand, the

same idea can be applied to workforce opportunities. Community capacity can be measured by comparing available opportunities and the ability of community members to seize said opportunities while contending with the barriers they encounter. BY increasing available opportunities, whether it be the availability of jobs or training interventions to employment, and creating better mechanisms for individuals to realize their own capacity to seize opportunities through the services of diverse programs. Within our state we can create more economic competition through collective advancement.

Workforce development serves the purpose of assisting individuals achieve their maximum capacity for seizing opportunities through strategic investment in services, education, and training that improve equity and socio-economic conditions among the state's community members. Such efforts increase the ability of individuals to achieve economic security and to collectively strengthen the competitive advantage of the state. As the competitiveness of the state increases so too does the availability of economic opportunities. This increase in community capacity creates a feedback loop -- increasing community capacity supports greater economic opportunities, which further strengthens community capacity.

The availability of economic opportunities can often be used as an indicator of economic growth. Economic growth is a sign of improving conditions and therefore is often the desired result of strategic investment in workforce development activities. Rhode Island seeks to improve economic growth by providing an environment in which firms are comfortable taking the risk of starting new ventures or expanding existing operations in the state. Investing in those industries that have the greatest potential for offering the most opportunities to the most individuals is the key to Rhode Island's economic development and the improvement of the quality and quantity of opportunities available to its citizens. However, economic development is only possible if individuals in the community have the capacity to access and sustain those emerging opportunities. The focus of this plan is to support economic growth through the development of the state's workforce and community capacity. While the purpose of this plan is set forth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the principles contained in this plan are the guiding principles of all workforce development activities within the state regardless of the statutory or fiscal source of the activity.

The guiding strategies of this plan include:

1. Implementing a demand-driven sector-based strategy to aggregate economic opportunities by employers and their intermediaries
2. A career pathway strategy to provide employment, education, training and support services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, so they can improve own individual capacity to effectively compete in the labor market to achieve economic security for themselves and their families.
3. Develop an effective performance measurement strategy to track labor market interactions beyond federal reporting requirements

To accomplish the statewide vision of maximizing the talents of all Rhode Islanders to meet the labor demand of employers, Rhode Island will utilize a demand driven sector strategy to aggregate the demands of employers by developing industry based sector partnerships and leveraging workforce intermediaries in each sector. To develop the talent of individuals, the State of Rhode Island will use the career pathway strategy and the expertise of the provider

network to develop individual plans of service that provide intensive individual attention and provide the combination of services that provides the greatest competitive advantage to the individual when competing in the labor market.

Demand Driven Sector Strategy:

Identifying and aggregating the workforce demands of employers and developing comprehensive solutions to meet those demands is the core of a sector strategy. In Rhode Island, the sector strategy is applied through the use of industry-based partnerships, also known as workforce intermediaries. As defined by Robert Giloth in Workforce Intermediaries for the Twenty-First Century, workforce intermediaries are “homegrown, local partnerships that bring together employers and workers, private and public funding streams, and relevant partners to fashion and implement pathways to career advancement and family-supporting employment for low-skilled workers.” Giloth goes on to explain workforce intermediaries complement the work of the public workforce system by focusing on the development of specific workforce solutions and implementing those solutions by integrating services and funding from a variety of sources both public and private. Public workforce program administrators and public boards complement the work of the intermediaries through the setting of policy, providing insight on larger economic trends, and improving access to public programs and funds.

Rhode Island’s state workforce board recognized the need to develop the capacity of workforce intermediaries and used state funding to support industry partnership grants. Building on the success of this initiative, Rhode Island under WIOA seeks to bring the workforce intermediary strategy to scale in all target industry clusters and to use all programs included in this plan to support this effort. This sectoral approach, the most ambitious according to Giloth, will develop workforce solutions that address connecting the labor supply to the workforce demand across employers in an industry cluster. By taking a sector approach to growing workforce intermediaries, Rhode Island will be able to align cross industry, demand-based workforce solutions to the statewide economic development initiatives in the same industry clusters. In addition, sectoral workforce intermediaries will be able to provide higher quality actionable intelligence that policymakers can use to better leverage public resources for the success of Rhode Island’s workforce members and employers.

The purpose of the sector based strategy and the use of workforce intermediaries is twofold. First, this strategy provides a structured way for employers within the same sector to collaborate to generate solutions for shared problems. Finding enough workers with the skills needed to supply the labor necessary to produce goods and services is one of the most critical issues facing employers and the reason why a sector strategy is needed to promote workforce development. The use of intermediaries allows employers the ability to collaborate through a third party so that the natural competition of employers doesn’t hinder the industry’s ability to develop solutions to common challenges that, if met, would benefit all employers in an industry. In addition, the structured collaboration managed through the intermediary helps employers to think critically about their workforce needs and then helps employers articulate those needs in a way that the workforce network can respond to.

The second purpose of a sector based strategy is to provide actionable intelligence to and from those programs serving clients who need to compete for employment, or who need to improve their current employment status. The sector based strategy leverages intermediaries to provide

real-time information about current labor needs and future needs. Using intermediaries to take the guess-work out of anticipating where employment is available will help programs working with clients to spend more resources serving clients than trying to perform the role of the workforce intermediary of determining what employers are looking for in the workforce. In addition, by leveraging intermediaries, workforce development partners will have better information around what RI employers actually need in terms of their workforce and how individuals can connect to those opportunities. This intelligence has often been the missing link between industry projections for workforce needs and the individuals seeking to connect to those projected opportunities. The construction industry provides a good example of this missing link. For many years the construction industry has projected a shortage of workers as existing workers begin to reach retirement age. Due to the long periods of time to train for certain trades, the number of younger workers available to replace retiring workers does not match the number of workers projected to retire. However, despite having this information many workforce programs struggle to find ways to connect their clients to this sector. By building upon the roles of workforce intermediaries in sectors such as construction, information about employer led training and recruitment activities can be provided in real-time to help connect existing clients to existing opportunities that represent the larger industry projections supported by labor market research and trends.

The scaling up of workforce intermediaries has started under the Real Jobs Rhode Island program. This grant program combines several federal and state funding sources to officially recognize workforce intermediaries and to fund workforce solutions developed by the intermediaries and their participating employers. These partnerships are comprised of at least five employers and at least two diverse entities. Employers in the partnership work collaboratively to identify shared workforce challenges, existing positions to be filled and the qualifications necessary to perform the tasks associated with the positions. In addition, near future labor needs are also identified and analyzed for the skills needed by future workers. Once this analysis of the labor needs of the employers is complete, the employers work with the non-employer partners to develop a strategy for obtaining the workers needed to fill the current or near future open positions. Such strategies primarily include developing industry “boot-camps”, on the job training programs, registered apprenticeships or other educational and occupational training programs.

Industry-based partnerships provide the mechanism for employers to convene around common workforce challenges and to enter into a formal partnership with government or community providers of their choice to develop customized solutions to the present labor shortage in their industry. Typically these partnerships are convened by an entity that is trusted in the employer community, such as an employer association, labor union, or other industry intermediary. The partnership develops the training modules, selects or develops the training curriculum, develops a recruitment strategy, and sets the application criteria for entering training. Each partnership is provided a grant advisor from the Department of Labor and Training who is responsible for assisting the partnership refine its planned solution and resolving any challenges the partnership may face implementing their proposed solutions, including obstacles such as connecting to other needed partners, overcoming bureaucratic processes and red tape, and ensuing public funding is received in a timely manner.

The role of the grant advisor and the other program staff involved in the partnership is critical to supporting the capacity building of the workforce intermediary by connecting the intermediary to

new potential partners and providing the partnership information about other existing resources that may help the partnership's effort. For example, one Real Jobs Rhode Island workforce intermediary developed a workforce solution that requires the development of a registered apprenticeship program for Biomedical Equipment Technicians and Data Scientists. The grant advisor connected the partnership to ApprenticeshipRI, an apprenticeship intermediary developed under the American Apprenticeship Initiative, to receive technical assistance in developing program standards and registering the new apprenticeship programs. The services of ApprenticeshipRI are provided at no cost to the partnership and will expedite the registration process. Such connections help workforce intermediaries leverage existing resources and maximize existing workforce investments.

In addition to connecting the workforce intermediaries to other resources, the advisor becomes an advocate for the work of the partnership inside of state government. Typically, the workforce intermediary will encounter a government process that creates an undue burden or hinders the very work of the partnership public investments are trying to support. The grant advisor has the authority to bring such issues to program administrators and work with the administrators on developing solutions that resolve the conflict between a partnership's work and a government process.

A prime example of how workforce intermediaries through networked government work through undue burden brought on by governmental processes was apparent in a local school who attempted to acquire used manufacturing equipment to expand school based training for CNC machining. The proposal of a local manufacturing company to sell used equipment to the school that had a CTE program designed to provide students with manufacturing training seemed to be a cut and dry idea that served both the needs of the school and the employer simultaneously. However, as the request moved through the procurement process at the local and state level the response to the school became a purchase document for buying new equipment which would eliminate the employer relationship and limit the number of machines the school could purchase. Through networked government, the employer intermediary for the manufacturers brought this problem to the Department of Labor and Training. The department then facilitated a meeting with the purchasing agencies and the local school. The issue was resolved and the original proposal progressed as planned. In this instance the immediate need to improve the state's workforce was resolved and the agencies involved gained valuable knowledge about how internal procedures could be amended to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

Industry-based partnerships with employers as the primary participants invert the common method of employer engagement. Rather than have employers participate in a service provider developed program, service providers are invited to participate in an employer led workforce development program. Employers determine what level of intervention they are willing to support when it comes to preparing future employees. In addition, employers choose which service providers they want to collaborate with in delivering the workforce solution developed. The freedom of partnerships to control their own membership allows existing collaborations to be supported and creates a healthy competition for those organizations, both employer and non-employer, looking to join the partnership. Employers looking to join the partnership must be willing to collaborate with the other employers and commit to the workforce solution developed. Service providers seeking to become partnership members directly must demonstrate their value to the employers and must provide services that fit the proposed solution strategy. Depending on the level of intervention included in the workforce solution, some service providers may provide

services as part of the industry-based training program, whereas other service providers may not be directly involved in the partnership but may align their pre-industry training services to the partnership's program.

The ability of service providers to participate in the partnership provides a unique opportunity for providers to work with employers directly to create or customize education or service programs and creates more opportunities for such programs to be delivered within the context of an occupational skills training program. Contextualized program delivery coupled with the direct input from employers will generate opportunities for services provided [Title I and II of WIOA and title IV of Vocational Rehabilitation] by each of the combined partner programs to be provided in tandem to a client participating in a contextualized learning program that also supports the attainment of a secondary education degree or its equivalent, or a post-secondary education credential. By providing services in tandem, workforce partners participating in the partnership will be more responsive to the employer demand for workers, while simultaneously providing more effective services to clients.

The more efficient delivery of services allows employers to connect with workers quicker while ensuring workers are adequately prepared for the training or placement. With the elimination of the sequence of services mandated under WIA, partner programs may now provide more services concurrently and may expedite the client's progress in achieving their career goals. An illustrative example, Title I Youth services can be used to provide tutoring and other academic supports for an older youth to compliment Title II education services provided to a client. In addition to complementary academic services, Title I funds for paid or unpaid work experience can be used to support occupational training for the same client. Further, the older youth may be co-enrolled as an Adult to receive additional training services when transitioning to a permanent position. Using funding in such a way allows participants to succeed in completing the employer-based training in a timely way and provides the employer with a trainee or employee that is achieving both academic and occupational skills attainment.

Diverse entities, regardless of type, participating in workforce intermediary partnerships have the ability to work directly with employers to develop workforce solutions that blend the occupational factors an employer group needs to see addressed with the services and education individual workers need to be successful. The workforce intermediary model builds diverse entities into the intermediary structure because the entire reason employers need a workforce intermediary is that their recruitment methods alone are unable to supply the workforce they need. Therefore, because employers cannot solve this workforce shortage alone, diverse entities and the people they serve are critical to the success of any workforce solution developed.

In addition to having direct access to employers, the workforce intermediary strategy provides diverse entities the opportunity to develop customized programs and service delivery methods for the intermediary's workforce plan. This ability gives the diverse entities a way to develop solutions that do not need to be system-wide changes. Many diverse entities have experienced pressure to make system-wide changes in response to employer needs. Such large scale projects, such as developing CTE curriculum or drafting elements of an adult education provider contract, hinder the entity's ability to engage in customized solutions development. A sector-based training program may not require education reform or to different statewide regulations changes around service delivery and the demand captured by the partnership may not represent a large enough or long-term type of employer demand to justify legacy system changes. Yet just because

employer needs for workforce talent may not warrant a system-wide change, the demand for those workers is real and diverse entities are needed by employers to find and retain those workers. The recognition of the need for diverse entities to participate in the workforce intermediary helps those entities connect client serving programs to the workforce solutions. The new workers required by employers must come from the client pools served by diverse entities, however, by working through workforce intermediaries the expertise of employers and diverse entities are brought together in an official capacity to solve workforce shortages and connect clients to open positions.

As partnerships form and the results of workforce solution plans are generated, best practices will emerge. While each partnership responds to the unique demands of its employer members, a community of learning will develop among partnerships, helping employers to better articulate their needs and match those needs to the appropriate service provider, helping service providers to better respond to the needs of employers in a meaningful way and more effectively serve their clients. In addition, grant advisors and other government staff can begin to solve practical challenges facing partnerships and can refine workforce, economic, and education policy to further support the efforts of the partnerships.

Another benefit of bringing employers and service providers together in industry-based partnerships is employers will learn how to better signal their workforce needs to trigger the appropriate response from the government and non-government workforce organizations. Translating the real time talent needs of an employer into a recruitment or application qualifications often results in a misalignment of the skills of potential candidates to the skills required at the production level or a shortage of qualified candidates responding to a recruitment. For example, education credentials are often required by employers more as a means to measure an individual's reliability rather than their academic skills. However, if a six week "boot camp" or similar program can demonstrate to an employer in real-time the reliability of a candidate than the employer may hire the individual with more confidence in the long-term success of the individual while the individual is spared having to overcome the barrier of having an academic credential before being qualified to gain employment. By working together, employers and service providers can produce a more accurate descriptions of what skills employers are looking for and how to find or develop those skills in the pool of available workers.

As the capacity of the workforce intermediaries within the targeted sectors of the economy grows, the intermediaries will provide industry employers even greater assistance in identifying and meeting employer workforce development needs. For many employers across the industry sectors, internal human resources capacity has been reduced. Companies have shed many of the internal human resources functions and analysis capability, limiting the available internal succession or expansion programs to ensure workforce continuity. Sectoral workforce intermediaries are positioned to fill this need. In earlier sector based partnerships, intermediaries were able to resolve single workforce challenges and to pilot best practice models. However, by taking the workforce intermediary strategy to scale, workforce intermediaries will be able to provide more comprehensive plans to address employer needs that are both immediate and long-term. Such efforts will include topics such as succession planning, reducing turnover, and developing post-employment training for continuing staff development. The workforce development network offers several tools to help employers address their workforce challenges. Educational programs, internships, on-the-job training, registered apprenticeship, and other

programs can be used in the workforce intermediary's plan unifying workforce efforts across the industry and within individual employer.

As workforce intermediaries begin to work with employers in a more comprehensive way, the government programs and the diverse entities participating in the intermediary will be able to develop investment strategies that braid multiple resources and funding sources together to support the planned workforce solution. Participating programs can add resources to aspects of the workforce plan that align with the program mission and goals. By looking to create a comprehensive strategy and investment plan, the intermediary will be able to attract more resources for its employer partners and their future workers. Participating programs receive better placement and retention of clients within the employer community and receive a more transparent account of how funds are used to support activities. This transparency not only allows for more effective investment, but will help prevent programs duplicating efforts and funding.

As partnerships begin to develop comprehensive workforce strategies and use the investments supporting the strategy, the larger workforce related programs, including all programs contained in this plan, will be able to analyze the trend of these workforce solutions and create more informed policy and investment decisions to improve the function and collaboration of workforce network entities. As the workforce intermediaries grow in capacity and organize more of the employer demand for workforce, the larger workforce related programs will align with each other to ensure greater connections to industry partners and to scale up existing efforts to complement the increased capacity of the intermediaries. This relationship creates a sustainable cycle of improving program alignment with aggregated demand where employer participation in intermediary partnerships increases the information available regarding employer demand to diverse entities, who are able to respond more effectively to employer demand.

Sector partnerships are now the primary mechanism for delivering workforce funding to employers, but will not be the sole mechanism. Businesses who wish to utilize subsidized services can be helped regardless of whether they belong in a sector partnership or not. Also, the grant program Real Jobs Rhode Island is not the only program that supports the sector strategy. The sector based approach helps build the capacity of many intermediaries including the work underway in our core programs. These include the Business Leadership Network operating under the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the workforce councils that are apart of Job Corps, and other existing grant work performed by the GWB such as the Workforce Innovation Grant. Workforce intermediaries will be prioritized for all available funding and services.

All programs should encourage employers to engage in industry collaboration to foster strong relationships between businesses, governments, and individuals. These new sector strategies are in no way exclusionary, the new standard of partnerships is meant to bring all parties responsible for the growth of the state's economy together. While not required, the participation in a partnership should be the primary way employers engage with the workforce network. The ability to aggregate demand and develop effective solutions depends on the use of this sector strategy. The ability for businesses that wish to utilize already established tools such as job listings through EmployRI without working with their industry peers will remain, however as employers seek more comprehensive workforce development solutions the mechanism of sector partnership will be used to assist employers in the development of these solutions

Career Pathway Strategy:

The goal of the sector based strategy is to aggregate the workforce needs to employers and to provide and mechanism to clearly articulate these needs to the workforce development network. This goal aims to help industries development statements of need that translate into activities that meet those needs, such as recruitments, training, etc. The career pathway strategy compliments this effort by coordinating the services and resources necessary to connect individuals to the opportunities presented as a result of the work of the sector intermediaries under the sector based strategy. The career pathway strategy is intended to aggregate individuals in the labor market and help those ready to be connected to the opportunities provided by the sector strategy find placements within sector based training and employment openings while preparing those who are not yet ready to take advantage of future opportunities.

It is important to understand that career pathways are not linear, nor the opportunities presented under the sector strategy will be unattainable to those individuals with barriers to employment. In fact, sector strategies often result in diverse populations participating in the opportunities generated by the workforce intermediaries. For example, the EARN Maryland program served a total of 912 people between June 2014 and December 2015 in entry level opportunities and of those participants 60% were women and 83% were minorities. Participants in the EARN Maryland program were also diverse in age with 35% served under the age of 30 45% between the ages of 30 and 49, and 20% over the age of 50 including 6 people over the age of 70.

The benefit of having a sector strategy is that it complements the career pathway strategy is that the workforce intermediaries are able to connect employers and workforce development partners directly. This provides workforce partners clear information about the requirements for participating in a sector based opportunity, which lends clarity on who to refer to these programs. At the same time the intermediary can work with workforce partners to determine if any unnecessary barriers are being put in place by the industry that are preventing quality applicants from being accepted.

In addition to managing barriers, the sector approach compliments the career pathway strategy by stabilizing the communication of employer demand which allows workforce partners to contribute to establishing an individual's career pathway so the individual can achieve his or her own goals in the most effective and efficient way. As mentioned above, a career pathway is not linear, nor is it the same for every individual. Understanding the needs and goals of the individual will inform what services are needed and the more effective tuning of those services. The career pathway strategy is the mirror strategy of the sector based approach, helping individuals determine their needs and then meeting those needs so the individual can take advantage of the opportunities presented through the sector strategy.

The Career Pathway elements provided by the United States Department of Labor and used by the GWB Career Pathway Advisory Committee illustrate that career pathways represent the client based perspective of the demand driven sector strategies. The six elements are as followed;

- Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles
- Identify sectors and industry and engage employers
- Design programs that meet the skill needs of high demand industries
- Identify funding needs and sources

- Align policies and programs
- Measure system change and performance

When employing the career pathway strategy that includes these elements, Rhode Island aligns with the definition of career pathway provided by WIOA. A career pathway is defined by WIOA Sec. 3 (7.) as:

- “A combination of rigorous and high quality education, training, and other services that;
- Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved;
 - Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the Act of August 16, 1937;
 - Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
 - Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
 - Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;
 - Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and
 - Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.”

The goal of the Rhode Island career pathway strategy is to create a client-centered planning process that can be used by all entities that may contribute to the individual’s career and educational development. By creating uniform processes that encompass intake, referral, and service delivery across programs we ensure that all participating agencies have a defined role and how to execute those roles equitably. When a client comes to a one-stop career center for services, they should move seamlessly through the frontline staff that represent separate agencies as if they are one single entity and not multiple entities working through collocation. Since no one agency has the ability to meet every need of any given client it is crucial that systems flow smoothly into each other between programs. The flexibility of WIOA and the nature of combine planning allows us to create a career pathway strategy that is facilitated and operated by all participating agencies, intermediaries, and frontline staff.

The career pathway planning for each individual shall have several components. First, the client profile will be established. This will provide demographic information and previous experience and education levels to help the service, training, or education entity know more about the individual client. The second component will be goal setting with service providers. The client will work to set their own goals regarding their career, education attainment and any other relative life goals, such as entering the military, breaking an addiction, obtaining housing, etc. Once the client has established their goals, then the client will identify their immediate needs, such as housing, finding immediate employment, filing for unemployment insurance, etc. Next, the client will identify their short term needs, which include any need that should be met in the next two years such as, obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent, becoming English proficient, etc. Third, the client will identify their long term needs, such as finishing a registered apprenticeship, applying for an advanced position within a desired sector, becoming economically self-sufficient, etc.

Due to the unique characteristics of each individual, the needs identified and the expected timeline for meeting those needs will vary depending on the individual. In addition, the career pathway planning should continue to evolve as clients experience success or if a client needs to adjust their goals and needs. Once the client's goals and needs are identified, the client should work with service providers to develop a financial plan that allows immediate needs to be met while supporting the individual's progress on meeting their longer-term goals. This plan may incorporate topics such as planning around expected unemployment insurance payment, financial assistance for college classes, the cost of training, childcare, or other topics. Once the financial needs of the client are understood the counselor can recommend an appropriate combination of services, training, and education to assist the client in meeting their needs in a financially sustainable way and refer the client to other professionals to assist them in accessing services. WIOA also provides for financial literacy services and clients should be offered the opportunity to take advantage of such services during as the financial planning process begins.

Financial planning with the service providers includes identifying other potential resources the client may be entitled to from other workforce development or supportive service programs. Because many of the available programs education rehabilitation services are client focused, program funding may be braided on an individual basis to provide the client with the most complete array of services to improve their competitiveness in the labor market. While a single program staff may be unable to determine client eligibility for other programs, the client-centered network will provide access to other program staff directly in order to quickly gain a response from a partner program about the eligibility of the client for additional services or resources. The financial and programmatic resources received by the client should support all aspects of the individual's career pathway plan.

By having the client complete a goal setting and needs assessment exercise, the service provider can determine what referrals should be made to connect the individual with additional resources and subject matter experts that can further help provide direction and assistance to the individual. For example, a client who is finishing an adult education program and has obtained a GED may be looking to participate in a sector-based training program. The adult education provider may refer the individual to the American Job Center where the individual can be connected to the workforce intermediary providing the sector-based training program, who in turn may connect the individual to the financial aid office of the local community college if college coursework is an element of the training program. This approach recognizes that no single entity has all the information a client may need and that the comprehensive career pathway planning will need multiple contributors who will help bridge the client's current situation to the next step in connecting the client to the next area of information or service. Again, a collaborative network government approach will allow entities in the workforce network to remain true to their core missions while assisting the client to connect to the services and resources needed.

Such opportunities and resources will be combined in such a way as to maximize the individual's competitiveness so they can successfully compete to achieve their career goals. This career pathway strategy will be used for WIOA clients initially, however, this tool can be adopted in other programs including, secondary and post-secondary institutions. Because career pathway planning reflects the individual's specific goals and needs, the appropriate combination of services is not limited and can be used for any population. In addition to being versatile for

different client types, this plan can also be used to coordinate service delivery across programs and service providers.

The need to expand career pathway planning into secondary and post-secondary institutions is especially critical when addressing the workforce needs of both in-school and out-of-school youth. While the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is not a combined program partner in this plan the relationship between the Career and Technical Education programs offered at the secondary level and the workforce development opportunities for youth are integral to the overall success of the state vision. Career pathway planning should start for CTE students currently enrolled in high school using existing student support mechanisms. In addition, CTE centers and programs should be included in sector-based intermediary partnerships to better align the education programs to the training requirements of industry. Such alignment will give CTE program administrators better insight into how to maintain program relevance to the employer community while providing employers a pipeline of talented new workers. Such alignment would promote the continuation of CTE students into industry training programs, such as registered apprenticeship or other workforce intermediary sponsored training. The youth funding available for in-school youth provided under Title I of WIOA, should be prioritized to support youth involved in CTE programs.

Career Pathway Planning for youth goes beyond the connection to the K-12 system and will include all programs and services necessary to assist the youth participating achieve their education and career goals. The career planning for participating youth should address all elements that effect their ability to meet their career and educational goals. Such elements include leveraging activates to support the success of youth populations with disabilities, such as those provided in partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services, while the youth pursue both the educational and career goals. In addition, the provisions of adult education for youth who are not attending school and who have not attained an equivalency credential will be included in the planning process. Ensuring those youth who receive TANF services are included in this planning is also imperative to the success of this strategy. This work is already underway in the Community Action Plans (CAP) that operate the youth centers around the state. Such inclusionary practices go beyond the scope of this plan to include other services outside those directly connected to career and education activities such as medical care. Overall, the career pathway strategy intends to eliminate silos among core programs and coordinate the services available to the youth in a way that is centered around helping the individuals meet their own goals. Such efforts will require the day to day collaboration of programs and partner staff across organizations both governmental and non-governmental. The mechanisms to be used to foster such collaboration are described in the implementation section.

An example of such alignment can be seen through the relationship of the Title I and Title II adult education literacy programs. This example illustrates how core and combined programs should identify services can be delivered in tandem to maximize the resources available to participant. For older youth over the age of 18, the career pathway plan should include those additional services provided under Title I for youth, such as activities leading to a high school diploma, high school diploma equivalency, or post-secondary credential, as well as additional services provided for Adult workers. Training services available to Adult and Dislocated Workers under Title 1 may be used for qualifying older youth. Career pathway planning for an older youth may span a longer timeframe and may include additional milestones than a similar plan for an Adult or Dislocated Worker. For example, an out-of-school youth may need job

experience services funded under Youth services which may lead to a placement requiring additional support provided under the Adult and Dislocated Worker Training services. Such a transition may include a Youth summer internship that becomes the need for On-the-Job Training once the Youth is hired into a permanent position. Similar coordination should be taken among all core and combined programs.

Whether it be for services intended for a youth or adult client, the customer centered career pathway strategy should be implemented throughout all programs. Standards for career pathway planning will be developed under the leadership of the state board and will assist workforce, educational, and service partners engage in a coordinated conversation around serving shared clients and provide mechanisms partners can use to attach a particular resource or service to an individual's plan without having the responsibility of providing all the services and resources the client may need. This work has begun under the Career Pathways Advisory Committee convened under the Governor's Workforce Board. This committee is currently using the U.S. DOL career pathways readiness assessment tool to evaluate current initiatives in preparation for the implementation of the network-wide career pathway strategy outlined above.

Additionally, through the Office of Rehabilitation (ORS) an extensive infrastructure is in place with the Rhode Island Department of Education a (RIDE) and every local education authority (LEA) to provide transition services to in-school youth with disabilities. The intent of this partnership is to ensure that youth with disabilities have an opportunity to experience career exploration, real work experiences and a plan for employment after high school. Through a Cooperative Agreement between RIDE and ORS, a Masters level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor from ORS works with every high school in the state of RI to provide technical assistance, case consultation and function as a referral source. Referrals to ORS occur while youth are still in high school so assessments, community based work experiences and transition planning can occur prior to graduation. This relationship between youth and ORS prior to graduation creates a link for youth to the world of adult services and ongoing movement toward employment.

Performance Measurement Strategy:

As Rhode Island responds to the legislative intent of WIOA to revamp and revitalize the methods and parameters state governments use to create effective workforce development intervention, developing the capacity to effectively measure the success of such interventions becomes imperative. Such measurements around the mechanics and effectiveness of an intervention provides policy makers the information necessary to determine the success of the program and effects future investment decisions. Although WIOA has been enacted to modernize our workforce development systems, it lacks sufficient performance metrics and uses measures which outcomes do not provide adequate documentation of progress. Rhode Island, through its innovative Real Jobs Rhode Island workforce development sector strategy program has taken upon itself to move beyond WIOA's general output measurements and will use more precise outcome based measurements in order to better understand the included program's efficacy on the state's economy. These measures and others like them will be managed at the state level access programs, providing decision makers a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of the interventions provided. These core measures are required for all six core programs.

The primary indicators of WIOA for core programs miss their intended mark and do not provide for the reporting of the programs in a comprehensive way. The primary indicators include recordings of how many participants enroll and finish the program, their employment status six months and a year after exiting the program, their annual salaries after six months and a year after exiting the program, and whether or not they have obtained post-secondary diplomas or certificates after leaving a WIOA funded program.

What these primary indicators fail to produce is an idea of whether or not the programs or services are responsible for these measured successes, and create assumptions about participants and the overall effectiveness of programs. By only using output metrics via recording the number of clients entering and exiting a program and whether or not they gain and retain employment; WIOA assumes the participant completed the program, entered a job related to the training, and retained that employment due to the skills obtained within the program. Yet the metrics mandated in WIOA do not allow these assumptions to be verified. When analyzing data, it is indeed accurate to say “x” number of participants “exited” the program and are now employed as an output of a program, but this information is not as useful for future programs as reporting that “x” number of participants reached a specifically defined outcome based on career pathway planning activities.

The state of Rhode Island is emphasizing continuous service and not rushing premature exits to simply meet these output measures. The state recognizes that clients in the greatest need of service from multiple programs to both gain and retain employment will likely need services beyond the date of employment. Prematurely having a client exit may jeopardize the long term success of that client and limit their ability to connect to future services. The state will track the outcome measures that will be developed in addition to the complementary outputs to these required by WIOA. Such outputs will include measures such as “entered employment before exit of the program”, employment retention (6 month and a year after exit). Outcome measures will assist the state in tracking individuals between programs, and the change experienced by a client as a result of both the individual and collective effect of all interventions provided. This will provide the state information on the existence of gaps between programs and will allow decision makers to make informed decision regarding strengthening referrals, increasing co-enrollment, and identifying processes that may hinder the delivery of services concurrently.

For example, a program participant could be employed six months or a year after exiting a program, but their employment may be unrelated to the subsidized training they received, or their salaries may also not have been determined by the skills gained in the program. Furthermore, the language of “exiting the program” within WIOA does not indicate whether the participant completed the training programs or not. These metrics fall short of indicating program effects on employment rates, labor force skill acquirement, or wage rates increases. Although the Governors Workforce Board (GWB) under WIOA mandate is to be representative of businesses located in different geographical regions throughout each state, WIOA’s metrics do not attempt to measure whether or not these subsidized services and programs are being utilized by participants throughout these represented regions.

Such measures do not provide enough information to decision makers about the effectiveness of a program. Therefore, Rhode Island will develop outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of both individual programs and the strategies outlined in this plan to supplement the output measures required by WIOA. Outcome measures will be used to analyze the

comprehensive effect of a program, and more broadly the workforce network as a whole. While individual outputs can track the efficiency of individual program elements, outcome measures will assess the overall quality of change experienced by program participants and employer partners.

Outcome measures focus on quality and the improvement or change experienced by a participant. Such measures allow for multiple aspects of a participant's experience to be tracked at the same time as the participant progresses through a program. Outcome measures can be connected across programs to provide better data around the number of participants in multiple programs or who complete one program and enter another. By linking outcome measures between programs and analyzing the quality of change experience by participants as a result of a single program and the combined results of multiple programs, the acuity of serving individuals with different barriers to employment will be expressed and can inform future negotiated performance levels for individual programs. By having the necessary data to analyze who is being served and the level for service necessary to provide participants the skills they need, despite any barriers they may experience, programs will be able to set more realistic, evidence based performance levels for the WIOA common measures.

The mechanism for developing such comprehensive measures already exists; Rhode Island's GWB under state law is responsible for gathering and distributing information from, and to, all agencies, departments, and councils within the coordinated-programs system. The board's duties also include maintaining a comprehensive inventory and analysis of workforce development activities in the state to support the biennial statewide employment and training plan. This collection of data provided to the GWB through programs like RJRI allow the board to make comprehensive decisions about broader economic growth. Recording general output measurements alone may provide an unclear picture of the effectiveness of workforce service interventions.

Rhode Island's Department of Labor and Training has begun this work in collaboration with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab by developing the Real Jobs RI project that will utilize robust outcome based metrics that paint a complete picture of the program's effectiveness in creating success for program sector partners and training participants alike. The work underway for this program provides a detailed example of the type of outcome based performance measurement Rhode Island seeks to create to more accurately measure the effectiveness of the strategies of this plan. These measurements aim to keep track of every level of the training process and all parties involved; the RIDLT will create reports for the following;

- Individual Participant Background Measurements
- Training Module Measurements
- Participating Employer Measurements
- Industry and Sector level Measurements
- System Level Measurements

On an individual participant level, the measurements that the RI DLT will use in The Real Jobs Rhode Island program will allow the agency to accurately gauge the programs effect on creating upward mobility for participants. Understanding a participant's background is imperative to knowing the possible barriers to employment and how to address them. These metrics also allow the department to follow individuals more closely on their advancement into the field they train

for. Recording a participant's pre-training wage gives the DLT and the GWB a standpoint in which to measure program efficacy on these factors and allows the agency to compare them to post-training wages. This also gives a broader understanding of how programs affect the Rhode Island workforce as a whole.

The training module measurements the RIDLT will use to gauge the success of individual training programs go far beyond the reporting mandates in WIOA. By paying close attention to the relevancy of a participant's employment after completion (not just exodus) of the program, we can ensure that it is in fact the program's training that affected the participant's employment status. It is critical to know whether a client staying in the industry in which they were trained resulted from these interventions provided by the programs. Without these measurements the RIDLT could not know if interventions are assisting sector partners filling vacant positions, which is the main goal of a demand based strategy. These metrics will also pay close attention to the advancement of incumbent workers and their wages within their industries.

In order for RJRI to truly be the "demand driven" sector strategy that it is expected to be, the RIDLT will closely monitor how satisfied employers are with the number of participants they actually employ while taking into account the acuity of those positions filled. These metrics ensure that businesses are fully involved in every step of this process and the agency retains them as partners in future employment acquisitions. Having a close relationship with business partners will give the department the information to determine efficient protocols and processes and where to make changes. Through this metric system the RIDLT will be able to gather more accurate information on the effect of program intervention on productivity and employment quality and communicate this information to other workforce partners. By recording the number of positions retained as a result from programs we can follow which programs create the most stable employment and reproduce these results to later projects.

On a larger scale, beyond individual businesses, within the state's industries and sectors the RIDLT will collect industry specific information to determine the program's effect on sectors as a whole. Although Real Jobs Rhode Island is designed to give jobs to unemployed citizens across the state, the state seeks to also ensure that the industries that fuel our economy are benefitting from these programs across the board and not just support isolated employer needs that cannot be related to a larger industry based strategy. By recording the sum of positions filled across multiple businesses in a sector, a better understanding of whether meaningful changes to the state's economy have taken place will emerge. This also makes industries more competitive with our neighboring states and helps attract new businesses.

The System level measures the RIDLT will collect will give the state as a whole the information necessary to make statutory and legal changes in order for programs to operate more smoothly. These measures will be, in effect, an aggregated sum of the individual and sector level measures. This will shed light on where the state can cut red tape where necessary. These metrics will also allow the state government to know whether the system is becoming more responsive to the needs of local businesses and where they can create more efficient policies.

Although WIOA does not mandate such rigorous measurement requirements, Rhode Island believes proper and precise outcome based metrics lead to a greater understanding of how programs affect our state's economy. Real Jobs Rhode Island is based on aligning agency and program goals with these new performance metrics. Rhode Island will take the comprehensive

performance measurement structure developed for RJRI to scale, by adding additional outcome measures for all programs included in this plan.

As evident by the combined planning process, Rhode Island recognizes that it is the combined efforts of programs and services that truly affect change for clients and employers in the state. No agency or program can complete the work alone. When measuring progress towards the goal of providing the correct combination of investment and service to ensure individual workers are connected to opportunities in the labor market while ensuring employer demands for skilled workers are met, outcome measures for the network must be adapted. These reporting mechanisms will allow the agency to use recorded data to improve program operations, evaluate programs impacts on workers and employers while creating a funding feedback loop.

By using evidence based outcomes the state can gather real-time information on what aspects of services and programs are effective in employment interventions which, in turn, will affect funding allocation. By taking the initiative through RJRI Rhode Island will be the example of a laboratory of democracy that other states can use as an example in creating new workforce development programs. When developing comprehensive outcome measures for WIOA partner programs the state of Rhode Island will convene subject matter experts both government and non-government to develop the measures with support from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government Performance Lab. Outcome measures for the six core programs will be developed over the next year, followed by the combined partner programs. Outcome measures for all programs should be complete by the midpoint of this plan.

Year: 2016		
EMPLOYMENT(SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)	Proposed/Expected Level	Negotiated/Adjusted level
Adults	64.8%	
Dislocated Workers	65.6%	
Youth (Education, Training, or employment)	57.6%	
Adult Education	41%	
Wagner Peyser	58%	
Vocational Rehab	Awaiting Federal RSA	
EMPLOYMENT (FOURTH QUARTER AFTER EXIT)		
Adult	71.2%	
Dislocated Worker	73.6%	
Youth	63.2%	
Adult Education	63%	
Wagner-Peyser	84%	
Vocational Rehabilitation	Awaiting Federal RSA	
MEDIAN EARNINGS (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)		
Adults	\$9,600	
Dislocated Workers	13,600	
Youth	\$2,400	
Adult Education	\$9,600	
Wagner-Peyser	\$13,600	
Vocational Rehabilitation	Awaiting Federal RSA	
CREDNTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE		
Adults	54.4%	
Dislocated Workers	76.6%	
Youth	50%	
Adult Education	50%	
Wagner-Peyser	NA	NA
Vocational Rehabilitation	Awaiting Federal RSA	
MEASUREABLE SKILLS GAINS		
Adults	54.4%	
Dislocated workers	57.6%	
Youth	77%	
Adult Education	47%	
Wagner-Peyser	NA	Na
Vocational Rehabilitation	Awaiting Federal RSA	

Table 1. This page lays out the states expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

Table 1 Expected Levels of Performance

Economic and Workforce Analysis of Rhode Island

The successful implementation of the strategies outlined above begins with a thorough understanding of the Rhode Island economy and existing workforce development activities. According to the study, *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State*, conducted by the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, Monitor Deloitte, and TEconomy Partners, LLC (2016), Rhode Island's economy is adrift. The State is 2.1% below its pre-recession employment level, and has lost momentum in many of its highest value export industries, leading to a lower rate of job production and business activity across the State's economy. The unemployment level was higher and declined more slowly than the rest of New England. The deterioration of the State's growth capacity has led to output and job growth numbers that are below the national average and an increase in income inequality.

Historically, Rhode Island's economy relied heavily on manufacturing. Jewelry, toy and textile manufacturing that were only moderately advanced made up a large portion of the manufacturing base, and were vulnerable to offshoring. While total advanced industry employment has declined at the fastest rate in the nation from 1980 (134,500 jobs) to 2013 (68,600 jobs), Rhode Island's advanced business service output and employment growth was the highest in New England from 2010 to 2013. Advanced business services include services modern corporations rely on for back-office and headquarter operations such as web services, data processing, marketing, client management, human resources, financial services, and strategy and product development support. However, growth in advanced business services has only partially offset the decline of the manufacturing base. Advanced business services has only added about 12,000 jobs since 1980, making up for a small fraction of the 50,000 jobs lost in manufacturing¹. It is a bleak picture, but one that can be changed if Rhode Island focuses on making sure workers have the skills they need to succeed in industries that will grow the economy.

Economic Analysis of Rhode Island

In order to recommend an economic development growth strategy, the researchers for Battelle, Brookings, Monitor Deloitte and TEconomy Partners, LLC. used a three-step process to identify what will drive the most economic growth in Rhode Island. First, an analysis of Rhode Island's current industries was conducted; second, Rhode Island's core competencies were assessed and aligned with the industry clusters; and, third, growth areas for the State were identified.

Industry Analysis

In the first step of its analysis, the report finds that Rhode Island "possesses an intricate, interrelated array of detailed industries that can be rolled up into broader clusters of promising industries."² There are 33 groups of these interrelated industries that serve as building blocks for industry clusters, which have "sizeable economic potential."³ These 33 groups were analyzed for their strength in three measures: high relative concentration compared to the national average, job creation, and relative employment growth compared to national trends.

¹ Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, Monitor Deloitte, and TEconomy Partners, LLC. (2016, January). *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

² Battelle Et Al. (2016) Page 37

³ Battelle Et Al. (2016) Page 38

The researchers then collapsed the 33 industry groups into eight broader industry clusters. The 33 groups, individually, did not have the scale needed to drive growth on their own. The median size of the industry groups is about 2,000 jobs. It is notable that the largest advanced industry group, computer systems and software, contained less than 7,000 workers, illustrating the lack of scale.

The eight industry clusters are: software systems and internet; instruments, electronics, and defense; advanced business services; health and life sciences; marine, materials, and machinery; design, consumer products, and food processing; arts, education, hospitality, and tourism; and, transportation, distribution, and logistics. Only two (marine, materials, and machinery and advanced business services) have outpaced national growth rates, while transportation, distribution, and logistics has kept pace with national growth. The remaining clusters were below national growth, or declined at a greater rate than the national level.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the eight industry clusters will experience significant economic output gains between 2013 and 2022, although projected employment growth is substantially lower. The researchers explain this by saying that output gains will come from high productivity gains.

Core Competencies

In the second step in the study, the researchers found “significant industry-based core competencies in eight areas relating to the state’s leading clusters.”⁴ Core competencies show where a state has the expertise and creative activity necessary to grow that industry. Battelle performed a “network analysis of forward patent citations” that “revealed a cohesive set of clusters arranged around a large volume of multidisciplinary ties across diverse groups of capabilities”. Eight industry-led core competencies were identified: advanced polymers, films, and composites; medical technology; data processing, e-commerce, and enterprise applications; semiconductors and electronic components; pharmaceuticals and supporting organic chemistry; games, toys, and gaming equipment; plastics packaging and containers; and, valves, piping and fluid systems.

Another analysis identified 17 research institution core competencies in areas corresponding to the state’s leading clusters by analyzing clusters of publication activity, areas of specialization in publications and research funding, presence of major funding, and national reputation. The majority of the core competencies stemmed from work at Brown University or the University of Rhode Island. Nine core competencies were identified in bioscience, a strong area for the State. Rhode Island also stands out nationally in math and ocean sciences, fine arts and design (led by the Rhode Island School of Design), and culinary arts (led by Johnson & Wales).

An additional analysis assessed Rhode Island’s position in relation to technology deployment across two measures: value added per employee and capacity to generate good jobs. Higher value added signify that an industry is more competitive, while a good job is defined as offering a livable wage with benefits for full-time workers who have less than a four-year degree. Five industry clusters exceeded the national level of value added per worker, which means that Brookings expects these five to expand their market share. These clusters are defense

⁴ Battelle Et All (2016) Page 46.

shipbuilding and maritime; design, materials, food, and custom manufacturing; advanced business services; transportation, shipping, and logistics; and, arts, education, hospitality, and tourism. Six of the clusters employ a significant share of their workforce in good jobs: marine, materials, and machinery; health and life sciences; instruments, electronics, and defense; advanced business services; software systems and internet; and, transportation, distribution, and logistics. In Rhode Island, 230 occupations are considered good jobs, accounting for 27% of employment in 2014.

High-Growth Industries for Economic Growth

In its third step, Brookings added a line of sight to the markets analysis of the industry clusters and core competency findings to find the industries that will most grow Rhode Island's economy.

This analysis outlined five high-value advanced industry growth areas and two opportunity industry growth areas that produce larger numbers of good jobs to focus on to put Rhode Island's economy back on course. The five advanced industry growth areas are: biomedical innovation; IT/software, cyber-physical systems and data analytics; defense shipbuilding and maritime; advanced business services; and, design, food and custom manufacturing. The two opportunity industry growth areas are transportation, distribution, and logistics; and, arts, education, hospitality and tourism.

Biomedical innovation accounted for 31,548 jobs in Rhode Island in 2013, with priority areas in biopharmaceuticals, medical devices and digital health. This industry growth area had a 31% higher industry concentration than the national rate, with a -0.2% job decline from 2009-2013. The study identified a broader range of opportunities in neuroscience-related therapeutics; medical devices for orthopedic, bio-sensing and neurological applications; and, health care informatics and digital innovations.

IT/software, cyber-physical systems and data analytics supported 12,538 jobs in 2013, with priority areas in data sciences and cyber-physical systems. The industry concentration was 18% higher than the nation, and saw a -3.2% job decline from 2009-2013. Opportunities are in the priority areas, as well as in autonomous underwater vehicles, remote medical device monitoring systems, environmental and energy monitoring, and smart grid infrastructure.

Defense shipbuilding and maritime was responsible for 19,107 jobs in 2013. Priority areas were submarine and boat building, ocean sciences and marine/coastal tourism. Rhode Island has an 86% higher industry concentration when compared to the nation, and saw 9.1% in jobs gains from 2009-2013.

There were 34,780 jobs in advanced business services in 2013, with back office operations as the priority area. This industry growth area has a 30% higher industry concentration than the nation, with 7.9% job growth from 2009-2013. Back office operations include web services, data processing, marketing, client management, human resources, financial services, and strategy and product development. These operations help firms improve their competitiveness in the megalopolis marketplace.

The fifth advanced industry growth area – design, materials, food and custom manufacturing – consisted of 11,045 jobs in 2013. This is a 128% higher industry concentration than the national rate, but saw a -9.4% job decline from 2009-2013. The priority areas are product design and food processing, with a growing interest in food manufacturing.

The two opportunity industry growth areas – transportation, distribution and logistics; and arts, education, hospitality and tourism – accounted for 21,322 and 42,801 jobs in 2013, respectively. Priority areas in transportation, distribution and logistics are grocery whole-sale and warehousing and storage, including ocean shipping, rail shipping and trucking. Priority areas in arts, education, hospitality and tourism are marine/coastal tourism and colleges and universities. Transportation, distribution and logistics was the only industry growth area with a lower industry concentration than the national rate at 27%, but saw a 5.3% job gain from 2009-2013. Arts, education, hospitality and tourism had a 38% higher industry concentration than the nation, and saw 5.2% in job gains from 2009-2013.

While these seven industries are identified as potential high growth areas, they are not individually large enough to support or justify a narrowly focused economic development strategy. The manufacturing base must move from low-end advanced manufacturing to higher-value, higher-tech production in niche markets. Increases in expenditures and production on medical equipment increase the demand for industry designers, which increases industry revenue across growth areas. To take advantage of this interconnectivity, the study recommends that Rhode Island use its network of interconnected industries to align core competencies and come up with broader growth opportunities. Specifically, the authors say, “To leverage its growth opportunities Rhode Island should pursue a focused strategy of investing in the most critical advanced industries growth drivers while improving its statewide platform for growth.”⁵

The Governors Workforce Board’s Biennial plan also created a projection for other high employment industries such as health care and construction. According to the report, healthcare and social assistance services comprised almost one in five jobs⁶. Healthcare is the largest industry in Rhode Island, employing over 80,000 people and is project to increase by nearly 13,000 jobs by 2020- which is a 16% increase over 10 years and has the largest job growth in any sector well about the state average of 10.7%. Of the 80,000 employed in the healthcare industry, 47,000 are patient care jobs ranging from entry level home care staff to surgeons and nurses. An additional 10,000 workers provide administrative support and 4,500 provide cleaning and food preparation⁷.

Additionally, the construction industry at the time of the release of the Biennial plan employed 15,943 individuals or three percent of the total working population in Rhode Island. Construction jobs have declined 15 percent since 2008 when the Building Futures construction industry skills gap study reported 22,000 workers in the state⁸. The growing occupation in this industry are carpenters and construction laborers. In addition, new workers entering the skilled technical trades are seeking much more competition for apprenticeship openings. In those trades more than 50 percent of candidates accepted as apprentices into the skilled trades have already completed two or more college courses or have a college degree in an unrelated field.

⁵ Battelle Et All. (2016) Page 8

⁶ Governor’s Workforce Board Rhode Island, Biennial Employment & Training Plan FY2014 and FY2015

⁷ Industry by Occupation Tables, Labor Market Information, August 2012

⁸ Building Futures Skills Gap Study [2012]

When it comes to the regional concentrations of labor throughout the state, almost half of Rhode Island’s jobs are concentrated in the Providence, Cranston and Warwick communities. One-quarter of the state’s employment is located in Providence alone. Pawtucket and East Providence together contain another 10 percent of employment. This concentration of employment in a few communities points to the importance of accessible transportation to work for both employers and workers, especially for those with disabilities and significant barriers to unemployment.

Workforce Analysis

In *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State*, the researchers find that Rhode Island “will face near- and longer-term challenges in mobilizing the kinds of technical skills needed to grow its advanced industries”.⁹ In the *Comprehensive System Improvement Plan*, the Governor’s Workforce Board states, “The state’s workforce system is not consistently meeting the needs of businesses and workers— and ultimately all its residents – by not creating the dynamic workforce needed for the 21st Century”.¹⁰

In order to be successful, particularly to grow the advanced business services industry, it will be critical within the next five years for Rhode Island to ensure that its “underserved populations have access to these growth opportunities.”¹¹

Lack of Education Necessary for Employment in the High-Growth Industries

The current working-age population is nationally competitive, but is behind that of the New England educational attainment rate. Rhode Island ranks sixth of six states in New England with regard to percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree and fifth on number of people with a graduate or professional degree. The State has strong job growth in high-skill jobs requiring at least a bachelor’s degree and middle-skill jobs requiring some postsecondary credential/associate’s degree. Rhode Island, when compared to the national average, has struggled to maintain and grow the educational attainment of its residents. “In sum, Rhode Island’s residents were barely more educated in 2014 than they were in 2009, and actually less educated in terms of the share of the population with only a bachelor’s degree.”¹² This will create a shortage of labor supply for Rhode Island businesses. This is particularly acute in computer programming and coding jobs, which have seen thousands of openings each year in Rhode Island. The number of occupations requiring STEAM degrees is growing in the state, but Rhode Island produces the lowest or almost lowest number of STEAM degrees among its benchmark states and in the region.

The study by Battelle et al. (2016) also finds that Rhode Island does not have the near-term or future talent pool necessary to fill jobs in technical fields in identified growth areas. Students are not prepared to enter STEAM careers, showing a lack of proficiency in science and math. Students are not being introduced to computer science and coding, which offer pathways to jobs in high-value advanced industries. Only 72 students took the AP computer science exam in

⁹ Battelle Et Al. (2016) P. 97

¹⁰ Rhode Island Governor’s Workforce Board. (2016, January). *Comprehensive System Improvement Plan For Workforce Development in Rhode Island*.

¹¹ Battelle Et Al. (2016) Page 68

¹² Battelle Et al. (2016) page 99

2014-2015, with many students only taking a basic computer literacy class to fulfill the technology graduation requirement.

Workforce Snapshot

The Battelle et al. (2016) report uses blunt statistics to illustrate how Rhode Island is divided by racial, ethnic, gender, and income lines in preparing people of color and low-income communities for employment its advanced and opportunity industries:

For Rhode Island's students of color and those from low-income households, math proficiency challenges are especially acute. Among eighth graders, 41 percent of white students but just 13 percent of Hispanic students, 14 percent of black students, and 15 percent of low-income students scored at proficiency on the math portion of the NAEP in 2015. Among fourth graders, 48 percent of white children were proficient, compared to 18 percent of Hispanic students, 17 percent of black students, and 21 percent of low-income students. These are disturbing numbers for the state's economic future given that 30 percent of the state's PK-12 population is Hispanic or black and 46 percent are low income. As Baby Boomers retire it is far from clear that the state's future workforce will be ready to fill their jobs in critical advanced industries, let alone support sector expansion. (p. 101-102)

Rhode Island will need enough workers to replace the retiring Baby Boomers and fill additional growth in high- and middle-skill jobs. As shown in the economic analysis section and the data presented above, Rhode Island must bring all of its citizens into the new economy in order to succeed.

According to Rhode Island census data Rhode Island's workforce population is aging at an alarming rate. When it comes to working age citizens, in 2010 Rhode Islander's aged 15-34 constituted 27.5% of Rhode Island's population, while people aged 35-64 made up 40.8% of the population. From 2000 to 2010 children age 10-14 declined 10.1%, children 5-9 declined 15.9% and children under 5 declined 10%. In comparison, between 2000 and 2010 the percentage of Rhode Islanders age 55-64 increased 95%.

When analyzing Rhode Island's workforce it is crucial to pay attention to immigrant population trends. According to the American Immigration Council, almost 1 in 8 Rhode Islanders are "new Americans", comprised of foreign born residents and their children. In 1990 Rhode Island's immigrants made up 9.5% of the population as a whole, by 2000 it increased to 11.4% and in 2013 it further increased to 12.9%. Immigrants in the state comprised 15.2% of the workforce population.

The trends of immigration in Rhode Island are represented in overall census demographic data. In 2000 the population of Rhode Island was 1,048,319; in 2010 this increased to 1,052,567- a relatively small change but there is a larger story to be told about this sum. Between 2000 and 2010 white/Caucasian residents declined 3.9 percent, from 891,191 in 2000 to 856,869 while African American and Latino populations increased dramatically. The African American population rose from 46,908 to 60,189- a 28.3% increase. Additionally, Latinos saw an even larger increase than African Americans; the population of Latinos and/or Hispanics in Rhode

Island jumped from 90,820 to 130,655- an overall increase of 43.9%. Asian populations also saw a 28.7% increase, while other minorities such as Native Americans (+18% increase) also saw boosts in numbers.

Through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services and programs, Rhode Island's disability population is also a crucial segment of our workforce that will be included in WIOA implementation and the execution of programs. According to the most recent available data from the Census Bureau, there are 63,400 working age Rhode Islanders with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64. It is critical to distinguish between working age people and those that acquire disabilities due to the aging process. Of those working age citizens with disabilities, 33.9% of people with disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed in juxtaposition with people who do not have disabilities who employed at a rate of 77.7%. Rhode Island currently ranks 32nd in the nation in terms of jobs for people with disabilities..

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program continues to serve Rhode Islanders with disabilities in increasing numbers. In FFY 2013, the VR Program provided services to over 7,500 individuals with disabilities. Additionally, 2,851 individuals completed applications for services; and 603 individual's successfully obtained and maintained employment consistent with their abilities, interests and informed choice. In addition to serving increased numbers of individuals with significant disabilities, the VR Program continues to outreach to un-served and underserved populations. In particular, this includes individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds; veterans returning from war; and individuals with learning disabilities served through the federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program (in Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Works Program (RIWorks)). The VR Program is strongly focused on outreach and services for youth that are in transition from school to self-sufficiency in adult life through employment, develop advocacy and leadership skills for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities in Rhode Island. ORS is looking to expand services to eligible individuals with disabilities through Innovation and Expansion (I & E) activities.

In addition to the usual employment issues surrounding those with disabilities its important within this plan and in the broader scope of workforce development to breakdown the social stigmas and stereotypes that follow disabled citizens. Individuals with disabilities represent an untapped labor resource that can meet diverse talent needs of our state's growing job sectors, but unless we change the culture and perception of people with disabilities within said sectors Rhode Island will continue to fail in its effort to include this untapped labor resource. It is important to understand that the barriers to gaining employment are not only physical. Attitudinal barriers can be just as detrimental as physical inaccessibility. The stigmas and misconceptions about Rhode Islanders with disabilities are serious barriers that our workforce system needs to address. The best method to challenge stigmas is to introduce employers to other employers who are already succeeding by hiring individuals with disabilities. The state will achieve this through our sector strategy work in programs such as Real Jobs Rhode Island in conjunction with the Office of Rehabilitation. As industries come together and work to identify best practices for hiring different populations the state will encourage businesses who employ workers with disabilities to share their experiences with their industry partners, we believe this will be the most efficient and effective way to incorporate this population into the work that is already underway for our sector strategy.

The comprehensive system improvement plan created by the Governor's Workforce Board reinforces the need for preparing and upskilling workers. Projected job growth in Rhode Island through 2022 suggests that 36% of all jobs in the state will require at least some college, and another 30% of jobs will require some type of post-secondary education. However, 42% of Rhode Islanders will not have any type of post-secondary education – and there will only be about 33% of jobs available to workers with only a high school diploma.¹³

Current Unemployment Data, Projected Future Employment, and Labor Market Trends

Rhode Island's December 2015 unemployment rate dropped to 5.1%, down from 6.8% in December 2014 and from a peak of 11.3% during the Recession in summer 2009.¹⁴ This decrease in the unemployment rate moves Rhode Island closer to the national average, but this is not just due to job gains. Rhode Island's workforce is shrinking, partly due to retiring Baby Boomers.

A report by the Economic Progress Institute (2015) found that Rhode Island must add 12,700 additional jobs to regain jobs that were lost during the recession and keep up with population growth. The state is close to prerecession levels – 1,600 jobs short – but needs to continue to grow to keep up with projected population growth.¹⁵

The Economic Progress Institute (2015) breaks down unemployment data by race and ethnicity, painting a different overall picture of the unemployment rate in Rhode Island. In 2014, the average unemployment rate was 7.7%, which was tied for the highest overall unemployment rate in the nation. When the unemployment rate is looked at by demographics that number changes drastically. In 2014, the White unemployment rate was 6.2%, compared to 11.5% for Black workers and 16.2% for Latino workers. The highest White unemployment rate, 9.7% in 2009, was almost lower than the lowest minority unemployment rates. The data shows that Latino workers had a lower unemployment rate than 9.7% prior to 2008.

The report also looks at unemployment data by age. Younger workers, age 16-24, were particularly hard hit with an unemployment rate of 14.9% in 2014. Among the 14.9% who were unemployed, 26% were considered long-term unemployed.

According to the RIDLT Labor Market Information's 2022 industry Outlook Report Rhode Island employment is expected to increase by more than 51,000 jobs during the 2012-2022 projection period as the state's economy continues to recover from recessionary losses. Employment in 2022 is projected to reach 545,550 an increase of 51,420 (10.4%) job from the 2012 employment level. Much of this growth is attributed to the increased demand for the products and services provided by the Health Care & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Administrative & Waste Services; Construction and Manufacturing sectors. Nationally employment is projected to increase by 10.8 percent. The largest numeric gains will continue to occur in the Health Care & Social Assistance sector. This sector is expected to account for 17 percent of the new job growth expected in the state during the 2012-2022 projection period. Increasing coverage, medical

¹³ Governor's Workforce Board. (2016). Comprehensive System Improvement Plan. Cranston, RI: Governor's Workforce Board.

¹⁴ RI Department of Labor and Training. (2016). Rhode Island-Based Jobs Up 1,100 from November; December Unemployment Rate Drops to 5.1 Percent [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.dlt.ri.gov/News_Releases/NR012116.htm.

¹⁵ Economic Progress Institute. (2015, December). The State of Working Rhode Island 2015: Workers of Color, page 6 figure 6; Providence, RI: Author.

advances along with an aging population will result in an increase of 13,852 (+17.2%) jobs. The Construction sector is projected to grow at the fastest rate (26.6 %) during the 2012 -2022 projection period. Prior to the recession, employment in this sector averaged 22,000 jobs. The projected growth of over 4,000 jobs will bring our construction industry close to its pre-recession levels.

Rhode Island's Consent Decree

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the State of Rhode Island entered into an agreement to give 3,250 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) the option of integrated day and employment services. Prior to the agreement, only 12% of individuals were in individualized, integrated employment. In the latest court monitor report, the State has not met its benchmarks for fulfilling the agreement (Moseley, 2015). According to data from A. Anthony Antosh from the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College, 21.2% of individuals with IDD were in integrated, paid employment in 2015.¹⁶

The state of RI recently negotiated a Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure that Employment First Principles and practices are utilized in planning and service delivery to adults, in-school youth and out-school youth with significant intellectual disabilities (I/DD) who need access to the continuum of Supported Employment Services in order to work. The DOJ court order requires three state agencies: (1) Office of Rehabilitation Services or ORS, (2) the Rhode Island Department of Education or RIDE and (3) the Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals or BHDDH to develop and implement a service delivery system that ensures individuals, adults and youth, with I/DD have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities in order to make fully informed choices about work. The three state agencies are developing Cooperative Agreements, Data Exchange Agreements, and joint Continuous Quality Improvement efforts as elements/requirements of the CD and ISA.

While the consent decree represents one instance of deficiency in providing adequate training and employment opportunities to populations with disabilities, in the future Rhode Island will ensure that this issue is addressed more broadly beyond the consent decree. The state recognizes its short comings with respect to the consent decree and is actively working to address the needs of those with physical, emotional, developmental or other disabilities. The DOJ settlement with the state created an opportunity for Governor Chaffee to proclaim RI as an Employment First state. This proclamation clearly articulated a commitment to all individuals, regardless of type of disability, to have the same access to integrated competitive employment opportunities afforded to non-disabled adults and youths.

The Rhode Island employment rate of individuals with disabilities has improved in recent years; it remains one of the highest in the nation at 9% and is the highest among the New England region. Information obtained from the Disability Employment Policy Resource by Topic in January of 2013; 16-19 year olds with a disability were employed at a rate of 12.7% in comparison to non-disabled youth which were employed at a rate of 24.9%. Additionally, for youth ages 20-24 with a disability the rate of employment was 25.7% compared to non-disabled

¹⁶ Antosh, Anthony A. (2016). RI Senate Committee on Health and Human Services Briefing on the Consent Decree. Providence, RI.

youth who were employed at a rate of 60.6%.

Workforce Development Activities in Rhode Island

The *Comprehensive System Improvement Plan*, developed by the Governor’s Workforce Board, included an interactive map of all workforce development activities that shows resource allocation and a geographic distribution of vendors. The map can be viewed here: <http://www.gwb.ri.gov/WFDdata.htm>. In this report and accompanying map, more than \$58.3 million in funding is illustrated. Of those funds, 66% are federal and 34% are state funds. This map also shows that workforce programs in Rhode Island serve a limited amount of people – out of 61 programs, 43% served fewer than 300 people and 23% served fewer than 100.

Expenditures per program vary widely, and do not paint an accurate picture of what it costs to train an individual and place them into meaningful employment. There are 340 unique vendors that receive funding from state agencies whose data was collected. Of those 340, the researchers point out that programs that cost more tend to provide more individualized or intensive services, yielding better long-term results for the individual, and therefore the State.¹⁷

The researchers suggest that the large number of programs is causing the State to spread its resources too widely, and should fund fewer programs with greater success rates. This could result in the workforce network becoming more cohesive and manageable for all involved, particularly in cases where vendors receive funding from more than one state agency. Increased coordination among agencies and targeted funding to more successful programs could lead to more effective service for job seekers and more growth opportunities for the identified high-growth advanced industry clusters.

However, work is currently underway in Rhode Island to develop sector based strategies to connect employers to the workers they need and addressing the state’s “skills gap”. The industry partnerships of the GWB started many years ago, and have now been integrated into the Real Jobs Rhode Island program. RJRI aims to allow industry partners to be the leaders in their own training programs. In the past, communication between the public and private sectors has not produced programs that have been exactly what businesses need. By creating a “demand driven” program which is led by the businesses and industries the state can help facilitate accurate training programs that exactly match business needs. Partnerships range across many sectors, including the Healthcare industry which employs over 80,000 people in Rhode Island.¹⁸ Giving industry leaders a key role in creating these programs will help the workforce network become more cohesive while facilitating seamless cooperation between agencies.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

Implementation of Strategy:

A network government approach to solving complex policy issues has been adopted in Rhode Island. In all state government, and particularly workforce development agencies, program

¹⁷ Governor’s Workforce Board. (2016). *Comprehensive System Improvement Plan*. Cranston, RI: Governor’s Workforce Board.

¹⁸ Governor’s Workforce Board Rhode Island (2014), *Biennial Employment & Training Plan* FY2014 and FY2015

administrators do not have the ability to make effective solutions to complex policy problems independently. As a result, government agencies must work collaboratively among themselves and with other non-government entities to create comprehensive action plans to meet shared goals. So what is network government?

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

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

Network government replaces the historic top-down, centralized strategy of government decision making. In Rhode Island, the strategy of embracing the network government approach allows past successful collaborations to be formally recognized and expanded, but also requires new collaborations to be fostered. While WIOA requires the collaboration of numerous partners, Rhode Island is taking such collaboration to the next level, integrating inter-agency and community partner collaboration into the official policy making and program design processes. Such collaborations not only generate policy recommendations, but solutions to day-to-day operational challenges that hinder service delivery to both clients and employers. This foundational strategy of networked government supports the three workforce strategies identified above.

While such cooperative service delivery may be substantially more difficult to establish and coordinate than a centralized bureaucracy, a network government strategy to service design and delivery provides unique service combinations more effectively to individuals and employers. Recognizing the need for a network government strategy and requiring agencies to solve problems through a network government approach allows the combined planning described in this document to take place and for practical implementation challenges to be addressed. The network government approach also provides workforce entities a more complete understanding of a client or employer and the ability to provide services in tandem to maximize the effectiveness of those services.

For this reason Rhode Island has included, in addition to the core program partners, the following combined program partners in this state plan: Temporary Assistance for Needing Families, Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers program; Jobs for Veterans State Grants program; Unemployment Insurance and Senior Community Service Employment Program. Workforce development partners shall include other community based job training and placement agencies. By coordinating the planning activities of these programs, Rhode Island seeks to create a common vision for meeting the career needs of all Rhode Islanders served under these programs.

WIOA allows networked government to be achieved by providing the flexibility needed to let its one stops play a role that is natural for them within the fabric of our states workforce

development network. We want to reimagine the One Stops to be a network connections facilitator. While workforce intermediaries will have the job of working with the demand end of the market, one stops gain the latitude to reimagine the role they play in our state specific and unique network. By spending the appropriate amount of time with job seekers, rather than attempting to be the entire network for the individual, the one stop can help connect job seekers to the services or industry partnerships based on the job seeker's specific needs. Some of the important aspects of re-aligning the one stops include focusing on training career coaches, case managers and guidance counselors on how to navigate the workforce development network, aligning coaching with industry needs and providing more clear and more refined guidance for job seekers.

Four major factors of network government collaboration must be addressed between all partners included in this plan before the most effective service delivery can be provided. These factors include: clarifying partner roles and implementing an integrated response team model, braiding resources across programs to maximize investments, establishing common standards around client intake and service referrals, and developing an IT infrastructure to support intelligence sharing and effective case management among partner entities, both government and non-government.

Clarifying partner roles and implementing an integrated resource team model is critical in developing a coordinated and collaborative service delivery system. The integrated resource team model started as a pilot model under the Rhode Island Disability Employment Initiative grant. In the pilot participating agencies committed to participating in ad-hoc teams developed around meeting the needs of individual clients. If one agency determined a client needed to be referred to additional services, the agency receiving the referral would commit to participating in a joint case management team with staff from other programs serving the same client. As a result, coordination and collaboration among employment and training programs fundamentally improved through a blending and braiding of resources at a customer level. This was achieved by developing better communication processes between multiple service systems for more integrated service delivery. By giving a goal specific explanation of available resources, the Resource Plan helps the customer, One-Stop staff, and community partners to coordinate and maximize available resources.

Bringing the integrated resource team model to scale for all programs included in this plan requires the implementation of formal mechanisms to create response teams. For frontline service employees state agencies responsible for administering a program shall assign points of contacts between frontline staff members to provide as close to immediate feedback as possible on the eligibility of a client for additional services. Frontline staff should be directed to view their caseload as a shared caseload with partnering agencies and that referrals requiring attention do not constitute a competing caseload. A client in need of TANF or a similar service is not more or less in need based on how the need was identified. Frontline staff connections between agencies does mean each agency will designate a single point of contact for all staff from a partner agencies. Such lop sided points of contacts often result in the single point of contact becoming overwhelmed with referrals and a lack of responsiveness all together if the individual is unavailable to process referrals. In addition, directing frontline staff to work collaboratively across agencies and to view their work as extensions of each other will also promote a greater knowledge and competency among frontline staff about available programs and resources that may benefit the client. Such work increases client access to programs and the efficiency of inter-

program referral, making inter-program collaboration at the frontline level routine business practice.

In addition to directing frontline staff to share caseloads, taking the integrated resource team model to scale also requires a government and non-government continuous improvement team structure to develop solutions around practical challenges hindering collaborative efforts throughout the workforce network. Continuous improvement teams are ad-hoc teams comprised of subject matter experts from both government agencies and non-government organizations convened to solve practical challenges facing the workforce network. The members of the team are identified in response to the level of practical challenge presented. Teams will be ad-hoc in nature and therefore will not be standing committees. Teams are topic centered not membership centered. When a team resolves a challenge the team will be dissolved even if the team members may serve on a new team. While a subtle difference, having topic-based teams rather than member-based teams ensures only the relative members are participating in a team for a given topic and that the topic at hand is addressed before a new topic is introduced.

The continuous improvement teams will be responsible for determining the cause of the challenge and will amend any internal policies or processes contributing to the cause of the challenge. If the team identifies more formal policies, such as regulations or statute, as being the cause of the challenge, the team shall make recommendations for amending the official policy to the appropriate agency executive or workforce board for consideration. Similar to the problem solving work of the workforce intermediary, the continuous improvement teams will be topic centered and responsible for implementing identified necessary changes. The stakeholder process for this plan resulted in a recommendation that the following five topics be addressed by the continuous improvement teams first. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the official memorandum documenting the recommendations of the stakeholder groups to the leading state agencies. This memorandum was presented to the state board on February 18th 2016.

First, it was recommended to convene a continuous improvement team to study the issue of common assessments and to provide recommendations to the departments for establishing a statewide common assessment policy. Different assessments of a similar competency are required by separate programs, which in some cases requires a client to take multiple assessments for the same competency before a service can be provided. Such duplication delays service provision to the client and consumes program resources that could be put towards other needs of the client.

It was also recommended to convene a team to develop solutions around collecting and sharing client information among one-stop network partners. The stakeholder group articulated the need for basic client data collection standards that all service providers could collect as part of an intake process. This team would be tasked with determining which data elements about a client should be shared among one-stop partners to increase the quality and efficiency of services provided. However, although stakeholders agreed on the need for better data sharing practices, concerns over the sharing of confidential data between entities was also expressed.

A third factor of partner coordination that must be addressed to provide better service delivery is the need to establish common standards around client intake and service referrals. This factor does not only pertain to the work conducted at the American Job Centers, but all partners providing services or connecting clients to services. Such partners may be government agencies,

community providers, education institutions, and non-profit organizations. As clients receive services from multiple programs and as program staff seek to refer clients successfully to other services, the need for common data collection and sharing standards that can be adopted by all workforce partners. During the stakeholder meeting held January 13th, 2016, both community and government partners identified the need to establish a client profile that each partner can access, eliminating the duplication of data collection, and the need to establish information sharing standards around program eligibility.

The client profile should contain a record of the individual's demographic information, resume elements, assessment results, and other data that is commonly used by service providers. The Rhode Island Departments of Education, Human Services, and Labor & Training will convene a work group comprised of program administrators and community providers to identify the common data elements of the client profile and the format in which those elements should be presented. Included in this work will be an analysis of all applicable privacy statutes of these elements and recommendations for establishing data sharing policies that fully comply with these statutes. The recommendations of this work group will be presented to the agency directors and the Governor's Workforce Board so a statewide, multiple agency, data sharing policy can be adopted.

Standards for sharing program information help create uniformity among partners for how program information is communicated. For programs receiving referrals from other partner agencies, standard information should be provided to the referring program. For example, program eligibility requirements or program contact information should be provided to the referring program to ensure the referral is appropriate for the client and to maximize the opportunity for a client to successfully enter the new program. Creating information standards does not mean creating another form for program staff to complete, instead the standard provides programs with guidance on what information referring programs need in order to make a quality referral. The work group described above will also recommend such information sharing standards for programs receiving referrals.

Both government and non-government partners rely on provided program information to make informed decisions about referring a client to an education program, training, employer recruitment, or other service. However, the information regarding the eligibility requirements of different opportunities may not provide enough detail for a quality referral to be made. For some organizations the volume of referrals made on a daily basis makes following up on each potential referral unfeasible. Establishing basic standards for eligibility data elements would create a uniform format to provide organizations making referrals the information necessary to prevent referring a client to an opportunity for which they are ineligible. Such standards may include education level required, documents required, and any other application requirements.

Stakeholders recommended establishing a team comprised of government and non-government partners to evaluate customer focus within the one-stop network and provide an action plan for increasing the customer centeredness inside the one-stop network in collaboration with the two local Workforce Development Boards. The issue of accessibility ranged from ensuring the hours of operation of career centers met the needs of clients to offering services in more geographic areas using technology, other partner organizations, and a mobile unit. These recommendations also included increasing individualized attention and case management services to one-stop clients, ensuring resources are provided to meet the language, education, physical, and

technological needs of clients, and improving one-stop partner collaboration around delivering services to a shared client.

Additionally, it was recommended to the state to establish an evaluation committee to develop performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of the one-stop network beyond the requirements of federal program reporting and track those measures on a continuous basis in collaboration with the two Local Workforce Development Board. With recommendations and goals brought forth creating a more client centered one-stop network, performance measures should be developed to track indicators of client centeredness.

Executive management coordination is the final aspect of the integrated response team model to be discussed. Executive managers in all program agencies are responsible for ensuring the new model is implemented throughout all levels of the program, committing mid-level administrators to participating in the continuous improvement teams, and ensuring changes resulting from continuous improvement teams are implemented. Executive management is also responsible for handling any formal policy recommendations resulting from the continuous improvement teams. These policy recommendations and other executive management coordination will take place through the Governor's Skill Cabinet and Children's Cabinet. The Governor's Children's Cabinet aims to improve the health, education, and wellbeing of the state's children, increase efficiency in coordination of service delivery, and improve data and evidence based decision making through strengthened data sharing capacities. The Cabinet is composed of directors from six agencies, representatives of child advocacy groups, and the Secretary of the Office of Health and Human Services. Similarly, the Governor is proposing to create a skills cabinet to align skills initiatives at the executive level with other programs. This cabinet will be comprised similarly to the Children's Cabinet with director level representatives. Both cabinets will include the agency leadership necessary to deliver high-level policy decisions and to make any formal policy changes. These cabinet meetings also allow such policy issues to be elevated to the Governor for consideration.

Formalizing such collaborative efforts at each management level and including both government and non-government participants will clarify the roles of network partners. Because most workforce related programs have similar goals for their clients, program design and requirements are also similar. As a result, programs have created numerous microcosms that perform similar functions yet remain unrelated from each other and often serving clients based on a specific set of client characteristics, such as having a disability or being a veteran. Examples of overlapping functions include, but are not limited to, employer outreach, subsidized employment programs, client counseling, and client assessment. Such duplication limits the resources of all programs, and creates confusion among both individual clients and businesses about what services exist, how to access services, and what combination of services will best suit an existing need.

Employer relations is one of the most important areas where role clarity is vital to program success and provides an illustrative example of how role clarity can improve program performance. With so many client-focused programs, there is very little inherent support for a coordinated employer engagement strategy. As a result employers may develop a strong relationship with one program and not gain access to other resources that may assist their workforce development efforts, or may experience the opposite challenge of government fatigue, which occurs when an employer is approached by too many programs seeking their advice and

participation. In a state the size of Rhode Island government fatigue can happen quickly if a coordinated employer engagement strategy is not in place.

All programs struggle to develop enough employer connections to generate enough employment opportunities for their clients. The inadvertent competition among programs for the same employer pool further reduces this capacity at the program level. By designating a lead agency to manage employer engagement for workforce purposes and ensuring that agency is aligned with the economic development strategy of the state will allow programs to combine resources to support this consolidated approach, which will allow freed funding to be used on other key program priorities. This does not mean programs will no longer interact with employers, on the contrary, program relationships with employers will be strengthened as a quality, coordinated approach will be used across programs resulting in more meaningful and numerous employer relationships for all partners.

To address this issue, and others like it, the Rhode Island Executive Office of Commerce will be responsible for setting and communicating the economic development strategy for the state. This office is required by Rhode Island state law to coordinate with the Department of Labor and Training to align the state workforce development efforts to the wider economic development efforts underway. With this relationship in place and with the state department of labor leading the statewide effort to create and scale up sector-based partnerships in line with the industries identified by the Executive Office of Commerce as targeted economic development industries, the department of labor will have the lead responsibility of coordinating employer engagement for partner programs included in this plan. The Department of Labor and Training will convene program administrators to identify current employer engagement with existing programs and develop joint employer engagement strategies.

Once programs are able to collaborate around shared functions, then program resources can be more effectively braided to support common goals. Because most program funding is participant based, programs have often struggled to leverage funding in a meaningful way since pooling funds has not been an option. Recognizing these past failings, Rhode Island seeks to develop real-time braiding practices that capitalize on pursuing the shared goals of separate programs and developing customized funding plans for each participant in a jointly supported activity. For example, the Real Jobs Rhode Island grant program is a sector-based program that uses several funding streams to support workforce solutions proposed by industry-based partnerships. Because Real Jobs Rhode Island is sector-based, the identity and characteristics of individual training participants is unknown at the time the grant proposal is submitted and even when participants are identified future cohorts may include a completely different combination of participants. As a result, the multiple funding sources supporting the program must be managed in such a way as to respond to the specific training plans and participants selected by the partnership in real-time. As Rhode Island implements its demand driven sector strategy and career pathway strategy, the ability to braid funding in real-time to address the unique needs of clients and employers becomes a critical function of all partner programs.

The fourth factor of developing an IT infrastructure able to support intelligence sharing and case management across programs provides workforce partners the technology necessary to access client information as needed and to keep all service providers working with a client up-to-date on the services received by the client. The IT infrastructure solution will include an umbrella data system that is able to mine existing agency MIS systems to generate client data without requiring

agencies to directly access those MIS systems. Such a system will also have the capability to generate referrals, allowing all partner programs to track client referrals in the same system and to allow staff from each program to connect quickly if additional information is required to serve the client. This data system can also serve as the electronic version of the client profile described above.

State Operating Systems and Policies

State Operating System

The State operating systems that will support the implementation of the State's strategies. This must include a description of

- State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies. (e.g. labor market info. systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.)
- Data-collection and reporting processes used to all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.

Rhode Island continues to build upon successful strategies of the past as well as embrace new ideas for improving the public workforce development system while supporting these approaches with a strong policy and operational architecture. Increasing integration across workforce development is a continued focus which is evident through the many examples where operating system alignment has either taken place or is expected to.

EmployRI

Rhode Island's statewide virtual One-Stop and case management system, EmployRI represents an early investment made by the state to align systems and support many of the its strategies by providing the information needed to inform and assist both employer and job seeking customers as well as cross-agency workforce development professionals and policy-makers. EmployRI also functions as the state's Job Bank and Labor Market Information system.

The operating system was procured from Geographic Solutions, Inc., and implemented in May of 2009; it is a free online workforce development tool designed for jobseekers, students, training providers, workforce professionals, and analysts. The system has greatly improved netWORKri's and YouthWORKS411's ability to assist with job matching for self-service jobseekers and employers. It has also been proven to be a helpful tool for staff- assisted matching and individualized skills gap analysis to assist jobseekers who may require additional schooling to upgrade their skills to meet current workforce demands.

In addition to jobs posted in EmployRI by Employers, the system spiders job postings from multiple job boards (state and private), government sites, corporate websites, social media sites, and the National Labor Exchange to create a job bank within the Virtual One-Stop. The system allows jobseekers to target their search by preferred employer, job location, source, date and/or required skills. The system also offers additional features for jobseekers and students such as résumé creation wizards (Resume Builder) and scheduled, automated job search tools (Virtual Recruiter), as well as lists of eligible training providers and programs. Jobseekers can also enter

the job and personal skills they possess as well as information on desired careers to further customize their job search within the system. Employers utilize the system to create and post job orders, write job descriptions, and conduct talent searches.

EmployRI is also an important labor market information tool, containing a vast database of industry and occupational information including wages, projected employment, and career and industry growth rates. The labor market information module contains state and national data and allows jobseekers to research potential careers and the required training and/or experience needed to excel in them.

EmployRI is used as the case management system for multiple workforce development programs, among them Wagner-Peyser (Labor Exchange), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), National Dislocated Worker Grants and RI Works. With the exception of RI Works, the federally required reports are run using this platform. Additionally, the state has purchased the Generic Program module for EmployRI that allows us to utilize the system for case management of additional grants and programs including disability employment initiatives. On-Ramps to Career Pathways (concluded), and is being updated now to include case management and reporting options for the Real Jobs Rhode Island program.

In 2011 the state purchased and implemented Scan Card Technology for EmployRI, which is designed to capture and record labor exchange services provided to customers; those services are automatically recorded into the system. Scan cards are issued to customers at the NetWORKri One-Stop Career Centers and are utilized to track Wagner-Peyser, RESEA, and RI Works participant activities. Since implementation, this technology has recorded more than 400,000 activities that would have otherwise been manually entered by staff and has provided a very positive return on investment in terms of improved productivity and data quality.

In 2015 the state purchased and launched both a Spanish module and a mobile app for EmployRI. The Spanish module is designed to allow users with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to view the EmployRI in Spanish affording many the opportunity to fully utilize all features the site offers in their primary language. The mobile app is available for both Apple and Android devices, is free for customers to download from either the Apple Store or Google Play, and allows mobile job-searching both manually and using GPS technology on mobile devices. Users can login to their EmployRI account from a mobile device and conduct and save general and customized job searches. The mobile app can also be utilized in Spanish by users who chose to set the phone's language settings to Spanish. Job searches conducted through the mobile app while jobseekers are logged into their EmployRI account are recorded for reporting under Wagner-Peyser just as they are when jobseekers are logged in to the full website and conduct a job search. Lastly, the vendor is currently in development of an app version for Employers that will allow them to conduct talent searches through their mobile device and thereby expand their EmployRI usability as well.

All of the improvements made to the employ RI reporting mechanisms and the services that have been updated allows it to be our primary data management system for the state's new sector based approach to workforce development and the career pathway strategies. Because of the push for more comprehensive data recording within both strategies, the activities of employers

within the EmployRI network feed into the umbrella data system which will generate data about the needs of employers and job seekers.

In addition, Employ RI has an integrated internet-based management information system (EmployRI) which includes common intake, case management, and data tracking components to meet the data collection and reporting requirements of and provide a single interface for WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, TAA, Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), Rapid Response activities, Business Services, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers program (MSFW), and other reportable One-Stop services. The system provides Local Workforce Development Boards with the tools needed to deliver WIOA services through an income growth model, integrating workforce information, transferable skill sets, and career paths into the case management system. With data from other One-Stop partners, EmployRI data provides seamless information sharing and data exchange in addition to increased customer service. This connectivity forms the basis for the development of enhanced interagency data exchange. DLT has an agreement with WRIS wage record exchange system in order to maximize documented performance outcomes.

This integrated intake system and resulting tracking system provides DLT, other state agency funded One-Stop partners and local entities, and most importantly, the Local Workforce Development Boards with the data necessary to operate and coordinate programs effectively. Utilizing this data, Rhode Island is able to evaluate how our systems are functioning, provide timely technical assistance, and help the local boards make programmatic and funding decisions. DLT and local workforce board staff continue to be involved in the development of the MIS system. Rhode Island is fully prepared to provide USDOL with any data it requires. EmployRI is a comprehensive data collection and management operating system that is used to enter participant and employer data, case notes, activities, assessments, exits, and follow-up activities. It contains online, real-time case management reports, providing local staff with demographic, activities, soft exit data, youth goals, and case management information.

The system also provides predictive performance reports based on staff entered data as well as the quarterly and annual WIOA reports and Wagner-Peyser 9002 series and Veterans 200 series reports which also incorporate wage record data. The predictive reports allow local workforce boards to determine performance and implement corrective action in a timely manner without having to wait for wage record data.

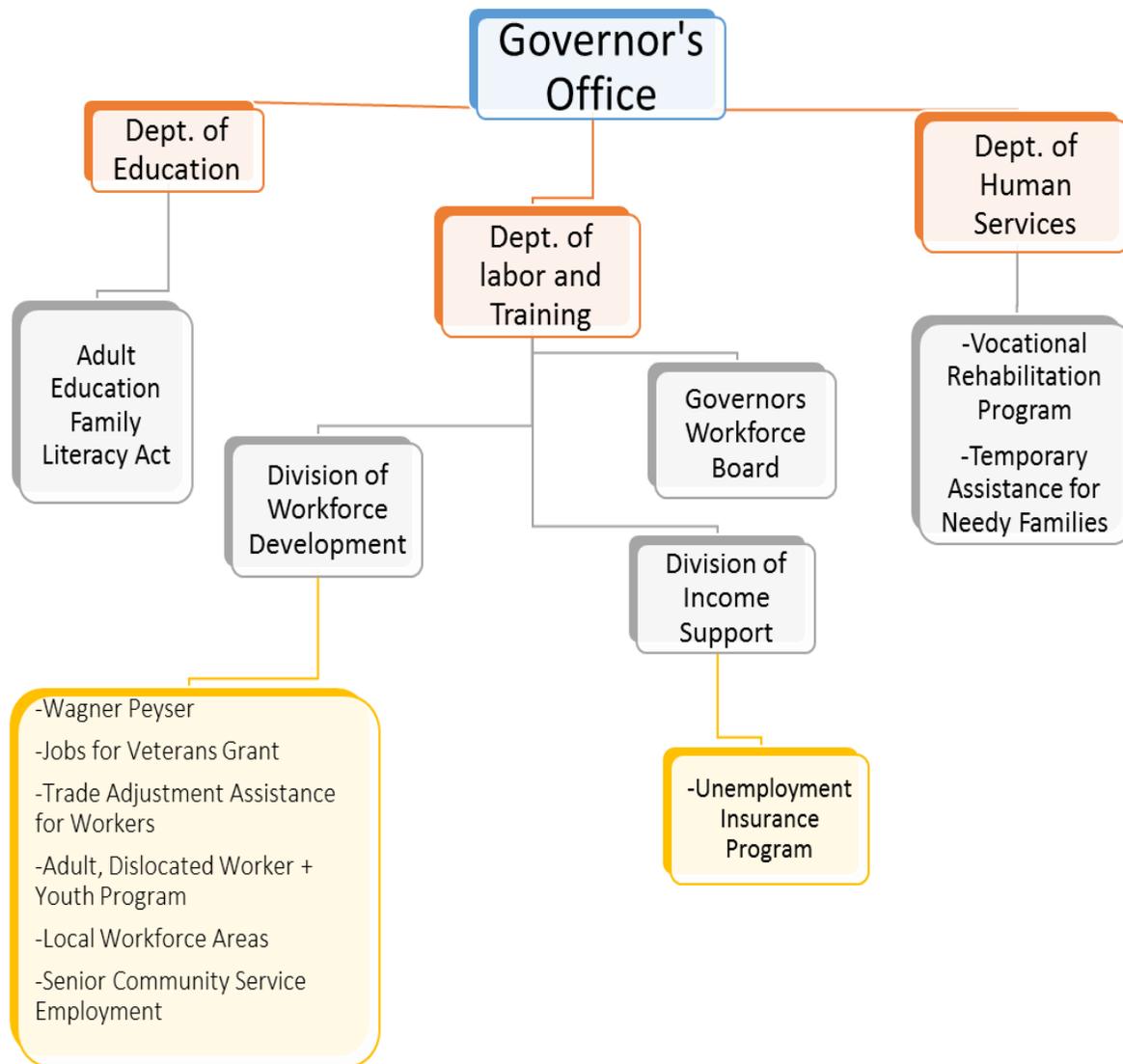
State Program and State Board Overview

- **State Agency Organization.** The organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organization structures.
- **State Board.** A description of the State Board, including a membership roster and board activities. This section also includes a description of how the State board will implement its functions under section 101 (d) of WIOA.

State Agency Organization

The programs included in this plan and their delivery systems are organized under three Departments as depicted below. In addition, there are two local workforce areas that are responsible for the delivery of local activities. The local WIBS have also established such

committees, such as the Disability Employment Subcommittee to ensure the needs of individuals within the local area are being met effectively through the programs and services available and to generate solutions to those needs. The specific details of the delivery services for each program are contained in the “Program Specifics” section of this plan. In addition, program specific organization charts are provided in Appendix C.



State Board Function

Rhode Island has a strong legacy of highly engaged state-level board leadership on workforce development. This has evolved out of a decade’s long stewardship of not only federal workforce dollars but of significant state investment as well. WIOA builds on this foundation and provides new opportunity to organize around the system leadership responsibilities.

The board is also charged with overseeing the funding and investments in workforce development including WIOA dollars. As such it plays an important role in system decisions like one-stop infrastructure costs and partners roles. It is also best situated to discuss and inform on

the technological improvements necessary to implement WIOA across agencies and for customers.

The Governor's Workforce Board capacity to effectively meet its WIOA duties lies first in its dynamic membership and its enlightened committee structure. The full GWB meets no less than 10 times a year, while its committees are typically active monthly. The board's work is coordinated across the following six committees - Strategic Investment and Evaluation, Executive, Adult Education, Youth, Career Pathways, Employers. Each committee plays a critical role under WIOA with the Executive Committee playing the principle lead and hub of coordination. The Executive Committee consists of the chairs of each of the other committees.

Executive Committee

Under both state and federal statute the GWB is responsible for the development, implementation and oversight of the state's workforce development plan. State program administrators and their respective agencies bring planning recommendations and options to the committee for input and approval. It is the Executive Committee that also coordinates board input into the plan itself.

The Executive Committee has developed the expertise among its members and staff around the development and issuance of WIOA policy. It is here that technical advisories, system guidance and ultimately final policy emerge. Most of the formal WIOA items are then brought to the full board via consent agenda, with the opportunity for full board discussion.

The Executive Committee is also responsible for overseeing the one-stop system including the development of statewide policies.

Strategic Investment and Evaluation Committee

This Committee has evolved into the primary player for workforce development accountability. Rhode Island and the GWB have moved aggressively towards better data-driven decision making. This work spans beyond WIOA to include state-funded investments and programs as well as those programs outside the traditional workforce partners including housing and transportation. The GWB has pioneered a Unified Program and Expenditure Report that annually captures the investments and outcomes across all workforce development programming (The report can be viewed here <http://www.gwb.ri.gov/WFDdata.htm>). The SI&E Committee is responsible to lead and inform the entire WIOA performance cycle including annual reports and continuous improvement strategies.

Youth and Adult Education Committees

Title I Youth and Title II Adult Education policy are coordinated through these respective committees. Each committee's membership either brings or has developed an expertise in these areas and will be responsible going forward for this work.

Career Pathways Committee

Rhode Island has been leading on career pathway system work for several years now. The Career Pathways Advisory Committee was made statutorily required in 2011. Since then the committee has been the forum for emerging Career Pathway implementation. The mission of the CPAC is to

prepare individuals for careers and connect businesses to a skilled workforce. This will be accomplished through service integration by unifying training, education, employment and supportive service programs into a single, customer-focused system across the state of Rhode Island. The Rhode Island career pathways model values employer engagement, customer focus, and data-driven decision making through programs and services that are collaboratively developed by education, workforce, employer and economic development partners.

State Board Activities

The Governor’s Workforce Board manages its responsibilities via a highly responsive and expert committee structure. An overview of this structure is presented above in section III (a)(1) of this plan. The GWB is staffed by six professionals including an executive director. The staff have responsibilities related to policy development, performance and accountability, career pathways, youth programming, and employer/sector partnership.

Governor’s Workforce Board Membership Roster

<p>Suzanna Alba Director of Alumni Affairs & College Relations Rhode Island College Kauffman Center</p> <p>Mario Bueno Executive Director Progreso Latino</p> <p>Timothy L. Byrne Business Manager United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters</p> <p>Channavy Chhay Executive Director Center for Southeast Asians</p> <p>Mike Grey VP of Operations, North East Region Sodexo School Services</p> <p>Constance A. Howes, JD, FACHE Executive Vice President Women’s Health for Care New England Health System</p> <p>Steve Kitchin VP of Corporate Education and Training New England Institute of Technology</p> <p>John C. Gregory President and CEO Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Janet Raymond</p>	<p>Bahjat Shariff Vice President of Operations Howley Bread Group</p> <p>Martin R. Trueb Senior VP and Treasurer Hasbro, Inc.</p> <p>Robin M. Coia Assistant Administrator New England Laborer’s Labor-Management Cooperation Trust</p> <p>Monica Dzialo M.Ed., CRC, QRC Business Relations Supervisor DHS/ Office of Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>Scott Jensen Director RI Department of Labor and Training</p> <p>Paul A. MacDonald President, Providence Central Federated Council</p> <p>Cheryl Merchant President/CEO Hope Global</p> <p>George H. Nee President RI AFL-CIO</p> <p>Nina Pande Executive Director Federal Hill House</p> <p>Stefan Pryor Commerce Secretary</p> <p>Ken Wagner Commissioner</p>
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Senior Vice President of Economic Development and Operations Providence Chamber of Commerce Susan Rittscher President and CEO Center for Women and Enterprise		RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

As elaborated within the performance accountability section of the state vision above, Rhode Island is proposing a significant and robust methodology for truly assessing the performance of the public workforce system, the WIOA core programs and one-stop platform of service delivery.

The state vision further outlines the state’s capacity to manage this accountability system, to analyze performance data in real time and longitudinally. Its ultimate goal is to produce actionable intelligence for the state, local workforce areas and regions to drive improvement.

Consistent with the statewide vision for meeting the labor demand of Rhode Island employers and serving the needs of its citizens, Rhode Island will also conduct research and evaluations to determine the effectiveness of new collaborations built under this plan. Complementing the new comprehensive performance measurement strategy, research and evaluations of the implementation and the results of the new initiatives, particularly the success of the workforce intermediaries, will provide greater context for the performance measures. Such context will be especially useful as Rhode Island uses a networked government approach to increase collaboration among programs and partners, and as services are delivered jointly among partner programs. Such work will be carried out under the direction of the state board and through partnerships with local institutions of higher education. This work is already underway with the University of Rhode Island, which will be providing case study analyses of the Real Jobs Rhode Island partnerships.

Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

Allocation of WIOA Youth Funds: (See Workforce Investment Notices Appendix G and Appendix H) The Secretary of Labor and the Governor of each state use the same three-part formula for the distribution of Youth funds, in the Secretary’s case to the states and in each Governor’s case, to local Workforce Development Areas. The three data factors utilized by the State for calculation of the formula are:

1. The average number of unemployed individuals for Areas of Substantial Unemployment for the previous 12 month period.
2. The number of excess unemployed individuals or the ASU excess (depending on which is higher) averages for the same 12 month period as used for the ASU unemployed data.
3. The number of economically disadvantaged Youth (age 16 – 21), excluding college students in the workforce and military) from special tabulations of data from the American Community Survey (ACS).

Of the WIOA formula funds allotted for services to Youth, the Governor must reserve funds from this source for statewide workforce development activities. In making these reservations, the Governor may reserve an amount up to a percentage determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor. The State then distributes the remainder of these funds among the local workforce development areas in accordance with the provisions of WIOA as stated above. A hold harmless provision (establishing a 90% minimum of prior year funding) prevents the very wide upward or downward swings in allocations from one year to the next that a pure application of formulas might bring.

Allocation of WIOA Adult Funds: (See Workforce Investment Notices Appendix G and Appendix H) The Secretary of Labor and the Governor of each state use the same three-part formula for the distribution of Adult funds, in the Secretary's case to the states and in each Governor's case, to local Workforce Development Areas.

1. The average number of unemployed individuals for Areas of Substantial Unemployment for the previous 12 month period.
2. The number of excess unemployed individuals or the ASU excess (depending on which is higher) averages for the same 12 month period as used for the ASU unemployed data.
3. The number of economically disadvantaged Adults (age 18 – 72, excluding college students in the workforce and military) from special tabulations of data from the American Community Survey (ACS).

Of the WIOA formula funds allotted for services to Adults, the Governor must reserve funds from each of these sources for statewide workforce development activities. In making these reservations, the Governor may reserve an amount up to a percentage determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor. The State then distributes the remainder of these funds among the local workforce development areas in accordance with the provisions of WIOA as stated above. A hold harmless provision (establishing a 90% minimum of prior year funding) prevents the very wide upward or downward swings in allocations from one year to the next that a pure application of formulas might bring.

(iii) **Allocation of WIOA Dislocated Worker Funds:** (See Workforce Investment Notices Appendix I and Appendix J) The Secretary of Labor and the Governor of each state use the same three-part formula for the distribution of Dislocated Worker funds, in the Secretary's case to the states and in each Governor's case, to local Workforce Development Areas. The three data factors utilized by the State for calculation of the formula are:

1. The number of unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.
2. The number of excess unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.
3. The number of long term unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.

Program Data

Data Alignment and Integration

WIOA Core Programs are administered across several state agencies each with separate case management and performance data systems. The ability to align, integrate and ideally unify these

information management systems has been a coveted yet elusive goal. All too often these separate systems represent major investments in infrastructure, contracts and staff training. Both WIOA and significant advancements in web-based technology hold promise.

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth data systems are already integrated with Wagner-Peyser with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT). DLT utilizes an Management Information System (MIS) developed by Geographic Solutions Inc. (GeoSol) that integrates reporting and case management for these core programs as well as Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers, Jobs for Veterans State Grant and other ETA programs. GeoSol has already made the necessary enhancements and database changes needed to meet WIOA reporting and service delivery requirements. This includes the new reporting around eligible training providers.

Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation are located at the Departments of Education and Human Services respectively has their own systems of reporting. These core programs have a long history of working together to support each other's' data needs including the sharing of wage record information. However a true integrated system has never materialized.

Given the data driven decision-making imperative within WIOA and the robust performance accountability standard Rhode Island will be holding itself, Rhode Island is reviewing several emerging cloud-based umbrella technologies that would permit agencies to keep existing databases while providing a solution to common intake, reporting and analysis.

Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success

Rhode Island has invested a significant amount in its ability to track its participants longitudinally. Through several Workforce Data Quality Initiatives, Rhode Island has built out linked data systems between core partners and other state agencies to evaluate workforce development interventions over time. This LDS will augment an already robust methodology for collecting data and measuring performance as described in the Strategic Elements section of this plan.

Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

- Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor marketing information, consistent with Federal and State Law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs)

Rhode Island uses both state wage record data and Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) data to track and report on state and local performance measures. DLT and the local WDBs have access to state wage record information. WIOA performance reports are distributed to the local areas on a quarterly basis.

Privacy Safeguards

EmployRI, the State's Virtual One-stop and Case Management Information System, provides the highest level of confidentiality where required and conforms to federal law Sec. 205 [42 U.S.C.] (c) (C) (vii). The VOS system supports the security standards recommended for State

Employment Security Agencies by the Information Technology Support Center, College Park, Maryland. The system supports user name and password access. The user name determines the access level and whether a user may access certain services and confidential data. If a user does not have privileges to view certain data, these fields will not be shown.

To secure VOS internet communications, a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encrypts a session between the server and the Web user. SSL is a highly reliable program layer for managing the security of message transmissions in a network. The programming for maintaining data confidentiality is contained in a program layer between an application such as VOS and the Internet's TCP/IP layers. The "sockets" part of the term refers to the socket methods of passing data back and forth between a client and a server program in a network or between program layers in the same computer. SSL uses the public-and-private key encryption system for RSA. This Internet authentication system uses an algorithm that also includes the use of a digital certificate.

A digital certificate is an electronic "access card" that establishes credentials when carrying out transactions on the Web, and is issued by a certification authority. It contains a copy of the certificate holder's public key (used for encrypting and decrypting messages and digital signatures) and the digital signature of the certificate-issuing authority so that a recipient can verify that the certificate is real. The following data is always encrypted when is accessed by a Virtual OneStop:

- Social Security Number
- Federal Employer Identifier Number
- Wage Records
- Individual benefits and public assistance Information
- User ID and Password

The controls in the VOS Administration Site and the SSL method for security give the VOS the means to protect confidential information and restrict access to that data. Our VOS has been successful with these methods of security.

Priority of Service for Veterans

- Discuss how the State implements and monitors the administration of priority of service to covered persons

As required by 38 U.S.C 4215 (b) and 20 CFR part 1001 and 1010, priority of service is provided to ensure that veterans and eligible persons receive consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify within the employment service delivery system and any sub-grantee funded in whole or in part by the US Department of Labor. Rhode Island's two local workforce development boards; which are the Workforce Partner of Greater Rhode Island and the Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, include the priority of service requirements in their local plans. At the local level, One-Stop managers are responsible for ensuring that priority of service is effectively integrated throughout the activities and services of the center. Our One Stop centers have intake forms/sign in sheets to identify veterans and eligible persons when they visit

our service delivery points in person. Front desk staff are trained to inquire about veteran status, so if the customer identifies as a veteran or an eligible person, the individual is provided immediate priority. In addition, display signs are posted at the One-stops point of entry that clearly describes priority of service an effort to encourage individuals to self-identify their veteran status. This information is also conveyed when veterans and eligible persons access service electronically. Our web-based EmployRI system includes content that explains priority of service, as well as provides veterans and eligible persons the opportunity to self-identify veteran status through virtual self-service registration.

If a veteran or an eligible persons during an eligibility assessment does not have the documentation verifying their eligibility for priority of service, they're afforded access to priority services provided by program staff (including an intensive service) while awaiting verification. The only services that require priority verification on eligibility prior to the provision of services are those required for the commitment of outside resources, such a classroom training.

Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

- Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support to addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Rhode Island's One-Stop Career Centers (netWORKri Offices) are fully accessible and in compliance with both WIOA Section 188 regulations on non-discrimination and Rhode Island General Laws Section 28-5 Fair Employment Practices. Each One-Stop Career Center has been monitored and inspected bi-annually by the Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disabilities and has been found to be in compliance. Rhode Island has had policy in place for many years dictating that when deficiencies are identified, One-Stops are informed in writing of the findings and a corrective action plan is put into place. There are currently no outstanding issues.

The Department of Labor and Training has been committed to making One-Stop Centers and programs more accessible to individuals with disabilities. In the past much of our Adaptive Technology has been upgraded using the Disability Employment Initiative Grant and the Office of Rehabilitation Services Assistive Technology Program. These Assessments of accessibility which allowed upgrades in Adaptive Technology and increased staff development when serving customers with disabilities.

In addition, ORS funds space on a daily basis at each of the One Stops to accommodate Masters Level vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from ORS working out of the One Stops. This relationship enables ORS clients to develop familiarity with the One Stop Services.

Furthermore, the ORS Vocational Rehabilitation counselor is a referral resource and provides technical assistance to the One Stop Staff.

All of the centers provide universal access to their services including registration, skills assessment, career counseling, job search, assistance in filling out unemployment claims and evaluation of eligibility for training programs to people with disabilities. Alternate formats for all information and application materials are offered. These include large print documents and use of various assisted technology devices and tools including TTY, Captel, Zoom Text, Magnifier, Pocket Talkers, Jaws and Magic. All staff in the One-Stops have been trained on the use of these tools and educated as to methods of communicating all services to individuals with disabilities. ORS personnel are periodically enlisted to provide training on Disability related topics.

Rhode Island's goal in WIOA services is to continue to improve training, employment opportunities and outcomes of adults with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security Disability insurance benefits. Staff training is an essential component to ensure compliance and maintain excellent customer service levels. Training has been provided by the RI Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing about the ADA and issues concerning the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community. Upcoming trainings are to include "Disability Discrimination and the ADA" presented by the RI Commission for Human Rights. In addition to Departmental trainings, the RI Department of Administration has held numerous trainings regarding diversity and inclusion.

EmployRI supports the collection of data for the new performance measurement strategy the state is implementing in this plan. The recording mechanisms in this system will collect data that goes above and beyond federal requirements in WIOA. These outcome based metrics collected within EmployRI and others like them will be managed at the state level access program, providing decision makers a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of services provided. By collecting information about all levels of participants involved in the workforce development, state leaders can have a better picture of which aspects work the best and which processes can be improved.

Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

- Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of limited English proficient individuals, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

Rhode Island's One-Stop Centers provide substantial access to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Useful and assistive tools include informative posters in visible locations in the centers that indicate language proficiency assistance is available and free of charge.

Staff at the One-Stops have been trained on LEP procedures and instructed to recognize individuals with LEP and disseminate appropriate information as needed.

- **Language Identification Card:** This process provides a Menu of Languages (over 150) that customers can identify and select their language of origin. The staff member has the ability to contact an interpreter immediately by telephone and start the translation process to begin services and help set up future appointments.
- **Translation Services:** The Workforce Development Services Division of the RI DLT has procured vendors to perform Interpretation and Translation services for individuals identified as Limited English Proficient Customers. Interpretation services for appointments and programs are available within 24 hours of the customer's request.
- **Internal Bi-lingual Staff:** All Comprehensive One-Stop locations have limited Bi-lingual staff on hand for immediate assistance.
- **EmployRI Spanish Module:** EmployRI.org is an internet-based system that contains information about job seekers, employers, job orders and training providers. EmployRI is also available in Spanish for the benefit of the department's Limited English Proficient customers.
- **EmployRI Mobile App (Spanish):** In 2015, RIDLT introduced the EmployRI Mobile app for both Apple (iOS) and Android mobile devices in English and Spanish. The app makes it easier for job seekers to search and apply for jobs posted in EmployRI.

In December of 2013, RI DLT established an LEP workgroup to address Limited English issues throughout its constituency. The workgroup consisted of RIDLT employees from each division and members of Community Based Organizations. The Department LEP plan was developed in January of 2014 and each division implemented accordingly. The Department is also in the process of procuring a WIOA Equal Opportunity Monitoring Training for the spring of 2016.

COORDINATION WITH PLAN PARTNERS

Due to the geographic size of Rhode Island and the centralization of many partner programs in certain state agencies, the state has established methods for undertaking combined planning efforts. These effort were used to develop this state plan for the purposes of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. With the election of Governor Raimondo, coordinated workforce planning began as an effort to align program strategies and goals to the priorities the Governor set around workforce and economic development; primarily meeting the labor needs of employers and ensure Rhode Islanders have the skills necessary to complete in the state's economy.

As a result, the Governor's cabinet members including; the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, the Director of the Department of Human Services, and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, have regular cabinet meetings to discuss how to align department programs and services to achieve the Governor's vision. Governor Raimondo has established a Children's Cabinet to convene decision makers and set statewide policy related to youth initiatives. In addition, a new Skills Leadership Team will be comprised of cabinet members and will focus on continuing coordinated planning around workforce development efforts. These standing sub-cabinets provide sustained executive coordination and also provides a mechanism for executive decision making to be responsive and timely in providing guidance to agency programs.

Below the cabinet level, department level program administrators meet on a monthly basis to discuss common areas of concern and to address interagency policy concerns. The interagency administrators meeting includes representatives from all partner programs, the Executive Director of the Governor's Workforce Board, representatives from the local workforce boards, institutions of higher education, and the Office of Library and Information Services among others. Administrators are able coordinate technical details among programs and solve the internal policy challenges that do not require the attention of executive cabinet members. Administrators also coordinate with community partners who are involved in the provision of service directly related to a program or in conjunction with a program's services.

Both the state workforce board and the two local workforce boards also contribute to maintaining coordination between partner programs. All workforce boards have representatives from the partner programs serving as board members or have those programs without direct representation provide regular program reports. Committees have been established to address policy and research initiative to improve coordination among workforce development partners, including partner programs. In addition, the executive staff of each board also participate in the inter-agency administrators meeting and other convening held by community partners.

In addition to the coordination within public agencies and the workforce boards, community organization also hold monthly meetings to improve coordination among government programs and community partners. For example, the Workforce Alliance is comprised of several adult education providers, community based organizations, such as the United Way, workforce intermediaries, organized labor, and state programs. This organization meets regularly to ensure community and government partners can coordinate services and initiatives to better provide the assistance needed by Rhode Islanders.

Such coordination efforts are supplemented by special stakeholder meetings as well. Stakeholders comprised of public agencies, community partners, workforce board members, among others, are regularly convened to provide insight and feedback during the planning processes, both statewide and program specific, and in response to the several workforce development activities analyses required of the state and local areas. Stakeholder meetings are often topic specific and convened to elicit feedback in preparation of a specific project, such as this plan.

COMMON ASSURANCES

The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts.

The State has established a policy to provide to the public, including individuals with disabilities, access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes.

The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving

the needs of the populations served by such programs.

The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public.

The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency officials for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such officials is a member of the State Board.

The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities.

The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3).

The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable.

The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program.

The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs.

The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE AND COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B Program Elements

Work Based Training Models:

Work based training models will be used as a part of the demand driven strategy described in the strategic elements section of this plan. Due to Rhode Island's intent to plan to take the demand strategy to scale, all work based learning models will be available to employers. Workforce intermediaries will be able to use such models funded by the Adult and dislocated worker programs. For the purpose of this plan, the emphasis of work based learning models should be the connection to the sector partnerships described under the sector strategy section of this plan. Specific policy and guidance will be issued as needed.

Registered Apprenticeships:

Rhode Island is responding to the national call to double the number of Registered Apprenticeships by 2020 and is on track to meet this goal. As a recipient of \$5 Million apprenticeship grant under the American Apprenticeship Initiative, Rhode Island has created an apprenticeship intermediary, apprenticeship RI to provide technical assistance to any sponsor seeking to register a program. In addition Rhode Island provided direct funding to three single employers and three employer associations to develop non-traditional apprenticeships in industries such as information technology, manufacturing, healthcare and maritime trades. In addition to supporting the expansion of the registered apprenticeship with resources from the grant, all new sponsors receiving grant funds are also participating in the Real Jobs Rhode Island's Sector program. Apprenticeship is not part of the statewide sector strategy and can be used by sector partnerships to provide long term training to meet the needs of the industries in Rhode Island as part of this expansion effort has also committee to increasing the diversity of participation in the apprenticeship system by increasing the number of women, people of color, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented populations participating in apprenticeship programs.

In addition to the alignment of apprenticeship with the larger sector strategy work, Rhode Island is also aligning the policy making structure of registered apprenticeship and workforce development. The current apprenticeship council chair serves as the director of the apprenticeship RI, and serves on one of the local workforce development boards. In addition, the apprenticeship council shares a member with the Governors workforce board. Connecting Registered apprenticeship and workforce development efforts is helping Rhode Island to expand apprenticeship into new industries as part of a coordinating sector strategy/

General Requirements - Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

- Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.

Rhode Island has designated two local workforce development areas with the state:

- A. Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Area (Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston)

B. Greater Rhode Island Development Workforce Area (The Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island)

As of the date of this plan's submission Rhode Island has not finalized the process of identifying regions with the state. The Governor, the Department of Labor and Training, each Local Workforce Development Area and the Governor's Workforce Board have started preliminary discussions around this issue and have begun work on gathering the supportive data necessary to inform these decisions.

- Describe the process used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

Each local area must submit a completed, signed, and dated Application for Local Area Designation form to the GWB to formally document its request and thereby complete the initial designation process. If a chief elected official and Local Board in a local area submits a request for initial designation, the Governor must approve the request, if for the 2 program years preceding the date of enactment of WIOA, the following criteria are met:

- A. The local area was designated as a local area for the purposes of the Workforce Investment Act
- B. The local area performed successfully;
- C. The local area sustained fiscal integrity.

When a local area is approved for initial designation, the period of initial designation applies to program years 2015 and 2016. If new local areas that do not already exist seek designation, they must submit a completed, signed, and dated Application for Local Area Designation form to the GWB. Applications will be accepted at any time and reviewed to ensure that local areas have met performance and maintained fiscal integrity as defined in appendix B (Workforce Investment Notice 15-05). Applications for new areas will also be reviewed to ensure that they meet the additional criteria listed. The Governor may designate new local areas based on requests from units of local government and the recommendation of the GWB that the new areas align with local labor market areas, align with economic development areas or have the federal and non-federal funds, including appropriate education and training providers, to administer activities under the WIOA Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker formula programs. For a more details on this procedure please refer to attached policies and approvals, appendix B (Workforce Investment Notice 15-05)

- Provide the appeals process referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

As per WIOA Section 102(b)(5) and proposed 20 CFR 679.290 and 683.630, a Chief Elected Official who requests and is denied initial and/or subsequent designation has 10 business days to submit a formal appeal to the State Board by communicating, in writing, the reason(s) for appealing the Governor's decision and providing evidence or information that support the appeal. Upon receipt of a formal appeal, the State Board has 10 business days to render a

decision on that appeal. If a decision is not rendered within that time frame or if the appeal is similarly denied, the Chief Elected Official may request review by the U.S. Secretary of Labor pursuant to proposed 20 CFR 683.640. The Secretary may subsequently order local workforce development area designation if the Secretary determines that the entity was not accorded procedural rights under the state's appeals process or finds that the area meets the initial and/or subsequent designation requirements at WIOA Section 106(b)(2) or 106(b)(3) and proposed 20 CFR 679.250.

- Provide the appeals process referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

Rhode Island will include this appeal process as part of its overall coordinated approach to infrastructure funding. Given the geographic compactness of Rhode Island and the ease of bringing state agencies together, the state's strategy is provide the leadership on infrastructure matters and attempt to broker at the outset a mutually-acceptable arrangement for all.

Statewide Activities

- Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

The Governor has identified RI Department of Labor and Training as the coordinating agency for the issuance and communication of WIOA policy to the workforce development system. RIDLT will also perform this function on behalf of the state workforce development board when appropriate. As an ongoing and progressive activity, the dissemination of WIOA policies to USDOL and the workforce system will take place when each discreet policy is completed. Similarly, the strategies and policies around the use of state-level funds will evolve necessarily and will be made available when developed.

- Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers
- Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.
- Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A).) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-affected dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

The Rapid Response Program, administered by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training's Business Services Unit, proactively responds to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers. The Rapid Response Unit works with employers and employee representative(s) to maximize public and private resources quickly and to minimize disruption associated with job loss. Rapid Response staff members conduct on-site services when possible to disseminate information on accessing unemployment insurance benefits, One Stop Career Center re-employment services and training opportunities. Additional Rapid Response team members presenting to Dislocated Workers include HealthSource RI and United States Department of Labor Employee Benefits Security Administration. Other on-site services include job fairs and customized re-employment workshops, such as resume development and interviewing strategies. Email distribution lists of Dislocated Workers are formed to provide immediate information and reemployment opportunities to these individuals. Additionally mailings will be sent out to notify those without computer access. Rapid Response activities have and can also be scheduled utilizing the One Stop Career Centers and the Business Workforce Center.

For those companies affected by increased imports or shifts to production out of the United States, Rapid Response staff members provide information about the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance RTAA, and Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) programs. Layoff aversion and business retention strategies are practiced as part of the scope of work for Rapid Response as a function of the Business Service Unit. The Business Service Representatives continually work on relationship building with the employer community to support them throughout all business cycles. Workshare has been a very popular and often used program by businesses experiencing a downturn in business. Joint visits to employers by the RI Department of Labor and Training Business Service Unit and other economic resources entities such as The RI Commerce and Small Business Development Corporations are conducted regularly initiated by outreach as a result of employer requests.

- Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding

The guiding principles that will inform the use of Governor's set-aside funds are three-fold. The first will be a laser-focused approach to developing and supporting demand-driven strategies including Real Jobs Rhode Island as authorized under WIOA 134 (a)(3)(A)(i). This priority will help grow the capacity of the workforce intermediaries and support the implementation of the sector based strategy. In addition, Rhode Island plans to also use formula based funding to support the training of eligible individuals participating in sector based training programs offered through sector based strategies.

Emphasis will also be placed on supporting customer-centered solutions when implementing the opportunities under WIOA. Lastly, Rhode Island is committed to driving system improvement with its state resources, including the effective execution of the required activities under the law. With these priorities in mind, Rhode Island reserves the right to maximize its flexibility to support Governor's agenda with the set-aside funds.

- Describe the states criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

In an effort to promote the greatest innovation and to maintain the greatest responsibility, the only criteria established regarding the issue of local area transfers is that the request be made in writing and provide an explanation for why the transfer is being sought. Local areas may request up to the full one hundred percent transfer and may make this request prior to expending the full amount initially provided to the program that will receive the proposed transfer. Rhode Island recognizes the need for local areas to be responsive to the workforce needs of both employers and individual clients and the state can support this need by allowing the greatest flexibility to local workforce boards when it comes to transferring funding. Additional policy and guidance will be issued if needed.

Youth Program Requirements

- State developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of providers to meet performance accountability measures based on the WIOA primary indicators of performance.

In addition to ensuring the grantees have the fiscal and administrative capacity necessary for providing the contracted services, local boards will use the following criteria to award grants for youth workforce activities. The grantee must be able to create an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for each youth, in align with the career pathway strategy described in the strategic elements section of this plan. The Individual Service Strategy identifies employment goals, achievable objectives, and a combination of services for the participant to reach the goals. These services must include but are not limited to the required WIOA elements. The ISS should be revised on a regular basis and include all services the participant may require, including supportive services (especially for youth with disabilities and/or basic skills deficient), that will lead to the achievement of an employment or education goal.

Also, the grantee must have the ability to connect youth to employment opportunities. This criteria aligns with the demand-driven sector strategy outlined in the strategic elements section of this plan. The grantee will engage with workforce intermediaries and employers to help youth find jobs with employers that: provide career exploration, skill development and positive adult role models; relate to the youth's interests, abilities, and career goals; include an overview of the company and specific job duties and responsibilities; and include rotation through different department within an organization during placement.

Other criteria the grantee must meet includes the ability to provide services related to media literacy, financial literacy, exposure to emerging career choices, linkages with local after school opportunities, links to post high school opportunities, connection to Regional Vocational Centers, disability service provider and all other required WIOA activities. The grantee must also be capable of providing such services for all youth populations, including younger in-school youth (ages 14-18), younger out-of-school youth (ages 16-18), and older youth (ages 19-24).

Meeting the performance accountability measures will be part of the contract between the local boards and the grantee. Regular reporting and monitoring will keep the local boards informed of

the performance of the grantee and any grantee not performing will receive technical assistance to improve performance.

- Describe how the state will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2) are made available and effectively implemented.

The state of Rhode Island will ensure that all elements within section 129(c)(2) are effectively implemented by using progressive and innovative technical assistance to all program participants and stakeholders. It is highly important to the state that youth program partners have full assistance in providing effective services to eligible youth across the state. The Rhode Island state government will monitor and oversee all aspects of these services and programs to determine the most effective factors in providing employment training interventions to participants. Additionally, close monitoring of these programs will shed light onto those areas in which the state can reduce inefficiency and waste while recognizing where it can remove unnecessary red tape for program partners.

- Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for “requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII).

All Rhode Island agencies that are responsible for the creation and administration of educational programs are currently working diligently to create policy that will require additional assistance for eligible participants to enter and complete the educational programs they have created. Although this policy will not be finalized by the date of the WIOA state plan submission, it is of high priority to all parties that this will be finalized in a timely fashion.

However, Governor Gina M. Raimondo reconvened The Rhode Island Children’s Cabinet in July 2015, after working with the General Assembly to revise the statute establishing the Cabinet as a decision-making entity for children. Pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-72.5 (1-3), the Children’s Cabinet is authorized to engage in interagency agreements and appropriate data-sharing to improve services and outcomes for children and youth. As the Cabinet pays special attention to the wellbeing and education of Rhode Island’s children, Governor Raimondo has appointed Elizabeth Roberts, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, as chair, and Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education, as vice chair. All of the program work as administered under WIOA related to both in school and out of school youth fits into the Children’s Cabinet’s goal to provide additional assistance for entering and completing programs.

In addition to the work already underway by the Raimondo administration to focus on core programs that engage and train in-school and out of school youth in training programs to create a capable and competent future workforce, WIOA also directly funds Rhode Island Job Corps through Title 1 Subsection C of the law. Exeter Job Corps Academy’s (EJCA) mission, career pathways design and performance measurement requirements immediately align with the outlined three strategies in this combined plan. EJCA has served over 2,730 youth since opening in January of 2005 with the majority of these students completing their initial education and

training goals. The program has utilized members of the Workforce Intermediaries to guide their Career Technical training programs as well as identify the variety of industry based credentials that our students achieve to be competitive in the Rhode Island Labor Market.

Current and Historical Labor Market research has shown that if a state is not investing in the emerging workforce at the same time the state is improving the incumbent workforce, economic development will stagnate. EJCA's enrollment process is the most inclusive for emerging workforce development programs. Job Corps provides basic needs supports while a student is enrolled including housing, clothing, meals, leadership and independent living skills training as well as Health and Wellness coverage. As part of this combined plan the ongoing success of job corps will be further aligned with the other sector strategy work such as the RJRI grant program and other programs underway in the other partner programs.

- Include the state definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(i). If state law does not define "not attending school", indicate that is the case.

State of Rhode Island Education Act Title 16-19-1(a)(b) defines the criteria of compulsory attendance for Rhode Island youth. These criteria are as followed:

“(a) Every child who has completed or will have completed six (6) years of life on or before September 1 of any school year and has not completed eighteen (18) years of life shall regularly attend some public day school during all the days and hours that the public schools are in session in the city or town in which the child resides.”

(b) A waiver to the compulsory attendance requirement may be granted by the superintendent only upon proof that the pupil is sixteen (16) years of age or older and has an alternative learning plan for obtaining either a high school diploma or its equivalent.

(1) Alternative learning plans shall include age-appropriate academic rigor and the flexibility to incorporate the pupil's interests and manner of learning. These plans may include, but are not limited to, such components or combination of components of extended learning opportunities as independent study, private instruction, performing groups, internships, community service, apprenticeships, and online courses that are currently funded and available to the school department and/or the community.

(2) Alternative learning plans shall be developed, and amended if necessary, in consultation with the pupil, a school guidance counselor, the school principal and at least one parent or guardian of the pupil, and submitted to the superintendent for approval.

(3) If the superintendent does not approve the alternative learning plan, the parent or guardian of the pupil may appeal such decision to the school committee. A parent or guardian may appeal the decision of the school committee to the commissioner of education pursuant to chapter 39 of title 16.”

Wagner- Peyser Program Elements

- Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

Employment Service Professional Staff Development

The State recognizes the value and importance of providing high quality customer service to both our employer and job seeker customers. The RI Department of Labor's Workforce Development Services Division (WDS) continually assesses and evaluates the current skills and abilities of One-Stop Staff in successfully performing their various job duties. Training is provided in an ongoing manner to meet the continuing professional development needs of our One-Stop Staff. WDS continues to provide in house training to the staff of the Business Workforce Center (BWC) on standard business service knowledge, programs and competencies across state agencies providing a variety of services and programs to the State's employer community. WDS continues to ensure that One-Stop management and staff have current knowledge and understanding of the local, state and national economic trends as it continues to implement demand-driven programs and services.

Specific areas of professional development are:

1. **Labor Exchange:** WDS continually reviews and evaluates the skills required to improve staff abilities to conduct job seeker and employer services such as workshops, one-on-one counseling, conducting public presentations and providing exceptional customer service. These skills are essential to providing job seekers the necessary understanding and utilization of the services available to them through the State's Workforce Development System.
2. **Labor Market Information (LMI):** WDS provides in house training in the area of labor market information to staff to better assist customers in understanding skill levels of in-demand jobs and how to identify transferrable skills or the need to upgrade current skills to meet the needs of employers. It also assists staff and customers in identifying salary demands and industry trends. Staff and customers will gain knowledge of how to research companies and better prepare for an interview or salary negotiation. The State had invested in tools to help in this effort.
3. **Effective Use of Tools:** One-Stop Staff have been trained and continue to be trained on utilization of the EmployRI (Virtual One-Stop System) including demonstration of how to better assist job seekers in job search methods, skills assessment and job matching as well as labor market information on industry trends and career growth and salary projections to help customers make more informed decisions on employment and training. Staff are trained to provide better understanding of identifying and highlighting skills in resumes as they relate to the demand-driven job descriptions.
4. **Business and Demand-Driven Technologies:** Professional staff development includes continuing on-line and classroom training in EmployRI usage. One-Stop Staff are trained to interact with employers to assist in job postings, resume search and recruitments. Staff are trained to disseminate employer needs to customers in a timely manner to meet the demand-driven needs of the employer. The latest tools and techniques are provided to enhance employer engagement and help to better direct job seekers to quality jobs.
5. **Technology:** WDS provides professional development to staff regarding upgrades in IT resources to be kept up to date regarding the most effective use of the latest technologies. This includes classroom training in the latest version of MS Office, continual webinars

and classroom training on the most effective use of the EmployRI system and use of labor market information. All staff in the One-Stops have been trained on the use of Adaptive Technology (AT) and educated as to methods of communicating all services to individuals with disabilities. Adaptive Technology includes use of various AT devices and tools including TTY, Captel, Zoom Text, Magnifier, Pocket Talkers, Jaws and Magic.

6. **Social Media & Electronic Communication:** Staff are trained to assist job seekers with the latest technology and techniques such as enhancing their electronic communication skills including an understanding of appropriate email usage, applying to jobs through on-line applications, use of social media including LinkedIn and other related sites to market their skills to employers. Staff disseminate to job seekers the latest information regarding how an employer will review an applicant's Internet profile when applying to their company. Staff are trained to enhance their use of electronic communication to job seekers through the latest email techniques to improve staff's outreach to job seekers for the purposes of doing targeted recruitments and connecting those job seekers to the appropriate employers.

The State is committed to continuing to provide current professional development activities and training to all staff with in the Rhode Island Workforce Development System.

Employment Service Professional Staff Development

- Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

The RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT) is a fully integrated and interconnected workforce development system. DLT oversees or is contracted to manage most of Workforce Development programs including Unemployment Insurance (UI) Title I, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the Wagner Peyser/Employment Services funded through the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). DLT continuously works to improve internal and external communication and integration through the Rhode Island Workforce Development System. Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training has identified liaisons in each division that assists in training and development of all One-Stop Career Center staff.

DLT provides training to all One-Stop Career Center staff regarding the identification of potential UI eligibility issues. Career Center staff have been trained to recognize UI eligibility issues and refer if necessary to UI staff for adjudication. DLT has put protocols in place to instruct on how to report potential UI eligibility issues for adjudication. When One-Stop staff become aware of a potential UI eligibility issues that are outside of the RESEA process the Adjudication Division is notified immediately of an eligibility issue.

- Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

The Unemployment Insurance Division currently funds half (1/2) an FTE within Workforce Development which allows for a presence at the One-Stop locations to assist claimants in filing claims for unemployment compensation. Each of the state's four (4) One-Stop locations have computers available in a resource area for individuals during business hours and these may be utilized to file unemployment compensation claims. The state accepts claims online and staff members are available in the resource area throughout the day to assist customers with questions and in completing the online UI claim form. Additionally, UI has a help website setup where customers can request assistance beyond simple questions related to filing a claim and in the larger One-Stops, this online help site is accessible through a dedicated UI Help Kiosk that allows customers to send their questions and/or requests for callback or UI assistance to UI without having to wait for an available computer in the resource area.

The State has ensured that there has been and will continue to be on-site assistance at One-Stops to give meaningful assistance to individuals who are filing UI claims. One-Stops have a dedicated bank of computers and telephone lines that are available and accessible to any customer that needs assistance filing a UI claim. One-Stops have dedicated kiosks that connect to UI for customers to be able to request information and a call back. One-Stop staff will work with Rapid Response teams to provide services to employers and workers in mass layoff situations and disseminate claims filing information.

Effective services will be provided to Veterans who file for benefits under the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX). The State is moving to create a collaboration between UI Programs and WDS services to ensure the State's Veteran's population has a smooth transition from the military to civilian life. This will insure that UCX claimants have better exposure to jobs and reemployment services and fully leverage existing resources. WDS will ensure that claimants are fully notified of deadlines and eligibility requirements associated with TRA, Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA), Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) programs, and that communication with case managers for TAA is seamless.

One-Stop staff are trained to provide information and meaningful assistance to all individuals in filing UI Claims. In addition, staff are trained to recognize individuals who lack computer skills and proactively offer one-on-one assistance in filing UI claims. Staff are also trained to recognize individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and individuals with disabilities and assist them in filing UI claims through the use of assistive tools and technology for LEP and individuals with disabilities.

One-Stops have procedures in place to assist customers having difficulty or needing immediate assistance for UI issues.

- Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

The State has conducted the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program (previously REA) since 2005 and continues to do so. Currently under the program, all UCX claimants and UI claimants deemed most likely to exhaust benefits (based on profiling scores) are directed to report to the One-Stops for mandatory participation in RESEA. The program focuses on providing participants with an overview of and access to the services available at the One-Stop Centers as well as through the state's Virtual One-Stop (EmployRI), a

detailed review of the claimant's responsibilities while collecting UI, and assistance accessing the resources necessary to lessen the time on unemployment and to return to work as quickly as possible. The program also mandates each participant receives two one-on-one sessions with a One-Stop staff member in addition to participation in additional reemployment services. Over the course of the two one-on-one meetings, UI Eligibility Reviews are conducted, staff reviews the claimant's work search, provides detailed labor market information, assists with job matching, conducts a skills gap analysis, reviews claimant's resume, assists claimant in registering with and accessing the Virtual One-Stop, schedules each claimant for additional reemployment services including workshops and/or training, and makes referrals to UI adjudication as appropriate.

Since August 31, 2014, the UI Division has required claimants (except those meeting specific exemption criteria) to post their resume in the state's Virtual One-Stop (EmployRI) by the 6th consecutive week of collecting UI benefits. To comply, claimants are required to be registered on EmployRI and utilize the system to create or upload a resume. Posting a resume on EmployRI allows Employers utilizing the system to conduct talent searches of UI claimants and allows claimants access to additional features including skills assessments, LMI, an automated job search tool (Virtual Recruiter) that sends automated messages regarding potential jobs that are a match to the criteria the user has defined, and other job search and reemployment resources. Claimants are also advised through call center and website messaging as well as printed media that they may take advantage of services provided at the state's One-Stop Career Centers.

Additionally, for claimants not referred to the One-Stops through RESEA and any other unemployed individuals, the state uses various media formats including print, television, and social media to communicate job openings, job fairs and training opportunities. Messaging on specific job openings refer customers to the Virtual One-Stop to apply while job fair communications provide location information, including instructions to visit a One-Stop Center when appropriate, and each weekend the state has an advertisement in the local newspaper that details scheduled job fairs and training opportunities, directing those interested to the One-Stop center. These types of outreach provided the initial contact for individuals to interact with the state's One-Stop system and allow Staff, through face-to-face and electronic interaction to provide reemployment assistance to these individuals. Any individual may also register on EmployRI and take advantage of all of the self-service reemployment tools available on the site.

- Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate including the following:
- Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

After filing a claim, UI claimants are advised via mail of work search requirements and other pertinent information regarding their claim. The materials in this mailing advise claimants of the existence of the state's One-Stop offices and invites them to visit the office for job search assistance and reemployment services. Claimants are required to post their resume on EmployRI and use of that system to do so triggers the claimant's WP enrollment, after which, their active enrollment and existence of a resume allows staff to conduct job matching and referrals to positions for the claimants. Additionally, claimants selected for RESEA are mandated to visit the One-Stop center for reemployment services and are informed of additional services the One-Stop

provides that they can access under Wagner-Peyser. After completion of RESEA claimants who have not yet returned to work are encouraged to continue their interaction with the One-Stop system, both in-person and virtually which continues their participation in WP supported activities.

- Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

RI UI claimants are required to register with the state's employment service. In order to assist claimants in complying with this requirement, the state has set up an automated process by which claimants who do not already have an existing registration (account) with the state's virtual One-Stop (EmployRI) are pre-registered thereby allowing them to login and complete only the portions of the registration information not previously provided on their UI claim. Claimants are advised via a letter included in their information packet after filing a claim of the instructions to access their EmployRI account.

- Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants;

Claimants selected for RESEA are required to participate in the program which includes administration of the work test and two eligibility assessment reviews by One-Stop staff as well as individual job matching assistance, job referrals as appropriate, and mandatory individualized reemployment services designed to assist claimants in utilizing the One-Stop system for job finding and placement. RESEA serves a significant portion of the UI claim load starting with UCX claimants and those deemed most likely to exhaust UI benefits based on profiling score.

Non-RESEA claimants who enter the One-Stop for services including referrals to TAA and WIOA, evaluation for training suitability and other staff-assisted services (i.e. job search assistance and career counseling) meet with staff who administer the work test and make referrals to UI adjudication as appropriate. Additionally, any claimant who interacts with One-Stop staff and discloses a potential work test compliance or other eligibility issue are referred to UI adjudication as appropriate.

- The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time.
(sec 121(e)(3));

The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is located in each One-Stop Center and has been since the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 effective July 1, 2000.

- State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations

Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities are provided in each One-Stop location by merit-based public employees. Employees in the One-Stops include Principal Employment and Training Interviewers, Senior Managers of Employment and Training Programs and a Coordinator of Employment and Training Programs.

Activities include registration, UI claim assistance, skills assessments, aptitude testing, occupational skills testing, career and aptitude assessment, re-employment services, individual counseling, resume assistance, job search strategies and career counseling.

Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)

Introduction

In the context of RI agriculture, the role of the RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT) is to provide workforce and labor exchange services to the agricultural community both agricultural employers and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW's). DLT will continue to comply with the requirements 20 CFR Subpart B, Service to MSFWs to ensure that any identified MSFWs are offered the same range of employment and training services, benefits and protections.

These services would mirror those services that are provided to non-MSFWS and would include counseling, skills assessment, job search assistance (including resume writing & interviewing skills workshops), and suitable Job training program referrals. Every effort will be made to achieve the Equity Ratio Indicators as well as the Minimum Service Level Indicators. RI will continue to increase and pursue activities statewide where there is a variety of agricultural activity taking place in the attempt to identify previously unknown migrant workers in order to provide access and information regarding Job Service information and other Job Center services.

“A significant state is one that has” the highest number of Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) applicants that utilized services under the Wagner-Peyser act and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. The employment and Training Administration (ETA) designates annually the top twenty states with the highest MSFW activity based on data received from state and local offices.” <http://doleta.gov/programs/who.msfw.cfm>. RI is not a significant MSFW state, although we will continue to provide information and assistance to employers and workers regarding assistance and services available to them. RI will report any Labor Law violations such as wages, hours, working conditions, certifications, recruitment and hiring of migrant workers ensuring the right to free access to intercede on behalf of individuals to its Labor Standards Unit and/or Federal Wage & Hour Division. Technical assistance and other business services designed to support and grow business will be provided as well.

Assessment of Need

- Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.
- An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means: 1) identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.
- An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing MSFW characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what

language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This Information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

Review of the Previous Year's Agricultural Activity in the State

The top five labor intensive crops in RI are, apples, greenhouse/nursery, dairy, aquaculture and sweet corn. The bulk of the farms are located in the Northern end of the state, with some on Aquidneck Island.

During PY2013, the major labor-intensive crop in RI was apples. In 2013 there were twenty four apple farms in RI. The months of heavy activity are April through October. The bulk of the farms are located in the Northern end of the state, with some on Aquidneck Island.

The "green" industry (i.e. nursery, horticulture and turf) remains vital and the largest contributor to the economy of agriculture in RI.

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Activities in the State

Two farms have placed job orders in conjunction with requesting H2A VISA workers with DLT. There were two requests H-2A VISA workers. There were no staff referrals that resulted in hires from the One-Stop Career Center, there were zero internet self-referrals made, and there were no hires from our One Stop Career Centers.

Total MSFW registrations in RI from PY2010 through the present indicate 27 Migrant Farm Workers and 34 Seasonal Farm Workers. NetWORKri One-Stop Career Center staff outreach to these individuals revealed much incorrect self-identification as Migrant Workers/Seasonal Workers during the registration processed in EmployRI, RI's online Labor Exchange instrument. Correct classification of the registered participants would fall under Seasonal Farm Workers, not necessarily working with crops, rather retail functions at farm stands, and also numerous landscaping activities.

Regardless, information was given regarding netWORKri services and the MSFW Complaint System.

Those that have accepted agricultural positions have been from Jamaica and speak primarily English-African Creole language known as Jamaican Patois. The approximate number of MFWS in the State during peak season is 27 and there were 34 MSFWs during peak season.

Projection of Agricultural Activity in the State

The level of crop activity in PY 2016 is expected to increase with a possibility that economic growth may lead to a more active agricultural economy resulting in expanding labor needs. Based on prior years the majority of the crop activities will be vegetables, strawberries and apples.

Most farms are family run occupying 69,589 acres dedicated to farming in RI. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that from 2007 to 2012, the total number of farms in Rhode Island grew from 1219 to 1243.

The market value of agricultural production declined 9 percent from 2007 and crop sales declined 12 percent. There have been no changes from previous years' crop activities and there are no known changes in the number of MSFWs involved in crop activity.

The number of farmers markets in RI continues to grow. There are now 55 farmers markets statewide and two operate year round, known as "winter farmers' markets" where a wide variety of locally-grown and produced products are available. RI serves every school district certain foods grown here within our state. Schools have purchased local milk to grass fed beef to eggs and continue to expand the amount and variety of locally grown, healthy foods. There are over 200 culinary and hospitality businesses in RI that now buy from local farms. Fresh, local food produced by RI agriculture complements the state's strength in not only tourism but culinary and healthcare as locally grown food is distributed directly and through RI's Farm Fresh Market Mobile to hotel chains, restaurants, hospital cafeterias and workplaces.

In terms of revenue generated RI's top five agricultural products are greenhouse and nursery products, dairy products, corn, potatoes and apples. Greenhouse and nursery products such as sod, ornamental trees, shrubs and other products account for more than half of the state's agricultural income. Rhode Island's most important agricultural asset, by a wide margin, is its greenhouse and nursery industry, accounting for 64.5% of the total agricultural production value. Sweet corn, potatoes, and apples are also important crops for the "ocean state." Rural areas support small-scale farming, including grapes for local wineries, turf grass and nursery stock. In terms of livestock, dairy products lead in Rhode Island. Other livestock products include cattle and calves, aquaculture (primarily clams and oysters), farm hogs, and farm chickens.

Three decades ago, many government officials and people in Rhode Island considered agriculture a dying sector. In recent years, however, we have seen a significant agricultural upturn in Rhode Island. According to the RI's Agricultural Five-Year Strategic Plan, farmers are recognized as good stewards of 11 percent of RI's land base and will continue to follow best management practices to ensure both natural resource conservation and food safety.

RI-grown food is helping to improve the nutritional health of the state's residents. Income-eligible seniors are given Senior Farmers Market Tuition Program coupons that are redeemable at various farmers' markets/stands or the mobile farmers market that visits senior meal sites. A similar farmer's market coupon program exists for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for the Women, Infants and Children Program. Installing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines to almost half of the RI's farmers markets has enabled SNAP recipients to use EBT cards to purchase Community Supportive Agriculture (CSA). CSA is a prepaid subscription to a farm's produce for the season. Some cities in RI participate in "bonus bucks", a program offered by Farm Fresh RI and several additional partners.

In accordance to the 2012 RI Census, the projected number of MSFWs in the State for the coming year would increase by approximately 10 percent. RI continues to seek new ways to

identify MSFWs including outreach and will collaborate with the Unemployment Insurance Division to identify additional MSFW not registering in EmployRI or not identified by outreach.

Outreach Activities

- The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:
 - A.** Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.
 - B.** Providing technical assistance to outreach workers. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment service complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.
 - C.** Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.
 - D.** Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.
 - E.** Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

Numeric Goals

The DLT plans to conduct outreach activity to MSFWs throughout the State during the peak harvest season of April through October offering information on our programs and services available in PY2016. The RI State Monitor Advocate has conducted MSFW outreach activities to 14 farms in order to make sufficient amount of information available in the temporary farm worker community.

The DLT would like to see these efforts increased to reflect a minimum of 20 days of outreach to MSFWs and more if the need is determined. The DLT will continue to offer information on services and programs for MSFWs and business services to promote growth and retention. To support this effort, a Business Service Representative will accompany the SMA on all outreach visits.

The RI DLT will conduct outreach activities to locate and to inform migrant and seasonal farm workers about the core, intensive training services available through the netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) is available to assist the netWORKri staff in the conduct of outreach activities.

RI has a collaborative atmosphere between state agencies, nonprofits and the farming community. Continued coordination is critical to maintain a flourishing agricultural region. We will continue to work cooperatively to improve existing employment and training programs to emphasize the quality of service and customer satisfaction. The NFJP is an integral part of the

public workforce system. The NFJP also partners with community organizations and state agencies to counter the chronic unemployment and underemployment experienced by farmworkers who depend primarily on jobs in agricultural labor performed across the country.

Assessment of Available Resources

DLT has available 5% of an FTE (Full Time Equivalent) to provide outreach services to MSFWs. If continued outreach identifies the need to increase this percentage, DLT will allocate the necessary funds to meet the needs and demands identified.

The SMA will document and maintain a file of on-going and regular reviews of services provided to MSFWs by the netWORKri One Stop Career Centers. The SMA will ensure that the netWORKri One Stop Career Centers staff are trained in the requirements of the regulations in respect to services offered to MSFWs.

Outreach contacts are conducted by the SMA during the peak harvest season. As many MSFWs as possible will be made aware of the full range of services, benefits and protection provided under 20 CFR653, Subpart B. The majority of contacts with MSFWs will be conducted between the peak harvest season and during routine agricultural employer's visitations.

For the quarter ending June 30, 2015 the RI DLT's SMA conducted 14 days of outreach. The plan for PY 2016 is to increase the level of outreach activity to twenty days. Outreach to ten farms was conducted for bruising, Immigration Ministry, and three farms and prevailing/practice surveys were mailed. For PY2015-2016, so far, the SMA has conducted nineteen outreach activities trying to identify MSFW's. These have included eleven field visits to local farms explaining the system to local agricultural employers. Also, three field checks took place to inform MSFWs of netWORKri services. No violations or complaints were found. Field conditions were checked, a house inspection was conducted, and three farms workers were interviewed. Joint outreach took place with an Outreach worker from NEFWC. Additionally, the SMA met with four Community Based Organizations to explain services available and to promote cooperative working relations between the DLT and farm worker groups.

SMA in conjunction with the New England Farm Worker's Council representative, located in the Providence netWORKri Career Center, will develop a schedule for the purpose of coordinating outreach efforts. Visits will be made to address the noted increase of fruit farms to provide farm workers with information regarding employment and training services at the DLT One Stop Career Centers in addition to their legal rights pertaining to wage and hour. Sanitary working conditions in and outside of their living quarters and also the effects of heat exhaustion are always brought to the farm workers attention. Farm workers are also provided with information pertaining to supportive services that the NEFWC can assist with such as heating assistance and additional training programs. Printed netWORKri promotional material is distributed as appropriate.

Outreach will be accomplished through personal contact. The DLT and the One-Stop Career Centers will continue to establish new and existing relationships with local and statewide networking groups on how to better serve the MSFW population.

Services Provided to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Through the American Job Center Network

- Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for: Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farm workers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:
 - a. How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers;
 - b. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.
- Marketing the employment service complaint system to farm workers and other groups. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

The DLT will ensure that the netWORKri staff members are trained in the requirements of the regulations in respect to services offered to MSFWs. In an effort to align and integrate workforce development services and to increase outreach to MSFWs, DLT and the New England Farm Worker's Council (NEFWC) have entered into a non-financial cooperative agreement. The NEFWC representative is located in the Providence netWORKri Career Center, the state's largest comprehensive One-Stop Career Center. DLT in cooperation with the New England Farm Worker's Council will work expeditiously to identify and assure maximum services to MSFWs.

The SMA will ensure that all services and programs that are provided in the netWORKri Centers are available for MSFWs. The One-Stop Career Center system ensures the needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers are met through universal access and full integration of services either on-site or through electronic access. The employers most likely to utilize MSFWs or seasonal farm workers are the small fruits, vegetable and apple growers. These employers have a historical timeframe of when they need workers and are contacted when those times arrive.

Services are available statewide and MSFW customers have access to a broad range of employment, training, and educational services including Adult Basic Education and ESL as this is a prerequisite to occupational skills and training. Information is provided to Partners and front line staff at the One Stop Career Centers on how to identify a MSFW in an effort to correctly identify a MSFW and code an individual appropriately in order to be referred to the NJFP. Training continues to be provided to the netWORKri staff regarding services available to MSFWs through NEFWC and the netWORKri staff has provided NEFWC with information regarding all services and activities available in the One-Stop Centers. The Monitor Advocate is available to assist offices in outreach, aside from independent activities with farm workers.

DLT will continue to work with and expand if possible contacts with non-profit organizations that have a special focus on or generally serve farm workers. Bilingual staff is also available to effectively assist MSFW customers with the use of job order information and job opportunities. Assistance is provided in the use of the computer terminals, self-registration access to Unemployment Insurance and any training opportunities. Federal and State mandatory posters are visibly displayed in the lobby area of each local office for public viewing. All posters are in English and Spanish.

Information about the available services and how to access them is provided through outreach to MSFWs. The SMA and the Business Service Unit will continue to perform outreach and inform employers of the benefits provided by the DLT in an effort to recruit locally within the state and through interstate worker recruitments. The SMA will work with areas without network meetings which would be interested in establishing them and explore opportunities for strengthening partnerships in such activities. Staff assistance is available to all MSFWs for learning the EmployRI system. Based on the customer's needs and desire an appropriate next step is determined such as self-service resource area, direct referral to partner program staff, orientations, one-on-one assistance, career counseling, Veteran's employment and training services, resume writing, job search assistance, vocational testing, reemployment workshops and job referrals.

The integration of services is intended to increase the quality of services, focus on skills of both unemployed and current workers. This assessment is critical to ensure appropriate and seamless referrals to partner programs and services.

Computers in the resource areas are designed to provide a multitude of employment and reemployment resources in each One-Stop. Customers may use job boards, Internet access, printers, telephones and faxes to conduct a job search free of charge with or without staff assistance, however, resource specialists knowledgeable in technology and partnership services are available in the resource area to assist customers.

Customers may also attend free staff run workshops in job searching, resume writing and interviewing skills. Customers interested in gaining new job skills or verifying their existing skills may access Alison online training. Also included are: various job banks, workforce information for job seekers and employers, cover letters, resumes, telephones and fax machines.

Comprehensive assessments, development of individual employment plans, individual and group counseling, workshops, testing and case management are examples of intensive services that could be provided.

In addition the One-Stop delivery system will address the needs of all farm workers, including those in need of Adult Basic Education and ESL as a prerequisite to occupational skills training in order to become gainfully employed and achieve upward mobility in the workforce. Services can be provided directly to customers either on site or through electronic access. Services are available statewide, at four strategically located One Stop centers. Each center offers interpretation services to individuals who require language assistance. All individuals will be able to access the core services.

In order to improve services and meet the minimum requirements, this agency will ensure that all One-Stop netWORKri staff has been properly trained in the proper identification and coding of MSFWs as well education on the multiple barriers of employment many MSFWs confront. The SMA will continue to conduct on-site monitoring of the netWORKri Centers to ensure compliance with federal requirements and to offer technical assistance to staff as needed. RIDLT is committed to achieving full compliance with the federally mandated minimum requirements for providing services to MSFWs during the coming year.

Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the American Job Center Network

The SMA will work with farmers to continue to inform them of the DLT’s workforce services. Wagner Peyser Act funded Labor Exchange activities will continue to provide services in the netWORKri Career Centers throughout the State. NetWORKri Centers offer accessible employment services that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all customers including employers. Staff in the NetWORKri Centers will continue to use a variety of tools to attempt to match the job seekers’ skills, interests and abilities with an initial upfront assessment and direction.

The SMA will continue to reinforce positive relationships with farm workers, farmers and other non-profit organizations while conducting outreach activities. During the next year RIDLT will continue to outreach to agricultural employers as a means of engaging local workers in the full range of services offered in the netWORKri Career Centers.

The State will continue to administer the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to labor needs.

Work with the New England Farm Worker’s Council; continue to attempt to develop a relationship with farm and agricultural organizations to identify agricultural employers who may not have been previously contacted. The SMA will also research and identify linkages with the Hispanic community to be able to connect with potential Migrant seasonal farm workers if they are present in RI.

DATA ANALYSIS

(i) Previous Years History

	PY13	PY14
Number of agricultural job orders received	3	4
Number of agricultural job orders filled	0	4
Percent filled	0	100%
Number of H-2A interstate clearance job orders received	0	3
Number of H-2A interstate clearance job orders initiated	1	3
Number of non H-2A interstate clearance job orders received	0	0

(ii)

PY15

Number of agricultural job orders expected to be received	4
Number of agricultural job orders projected to be filled	4
Percent filled	100%
Estimated number of interstate clearance orders received	4
Estimated number of interstate clearance orders initiated	4

F. Other Requirements

Review and Public Comment

- In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed

plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must:

- 1). Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP;
 - 2). Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and
 - 3). Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.
- The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.
 - Data Assessment. Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.
 - Assessment of progress. The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.
 - State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

State Monitor Advocate

The SMA has been afforded the opportunity to review and provide input into the Agricultural Outreach Plan. The SMA comments and recommendations have been incorporated into the Plan, and she will be kept informed of further plan development.

Participation and Public Comment

The plan was sent out to the New England Farm Worker's Council on March 28, 2014 and accepted with no comment. Additionally, the plan was sent out to the following Agricultural Organizations on April 9, 2014:

1. RI Department of Environmental Management-Agricultural Division
2. RI Farm Bureau <http://rifb.org/>
3. Farm Fresh RI <http://www.farmfreshri.org/>
4. UDA Farm Service Agency

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=ri&area=home&subject=landing&topic=land ing>

There were no comments. The plan was reviewed for modification to the State Integrated Plan at the Strategic Investment Committee of the Governor's Workforce Board. The Governor's Workforce Board's Strategic Investment Committee approved the plan on June 3, 2014 and forwarded to the full Board for approval. The full Board approved the plan on June 19, 2014.

Most of the demographic information was based on the RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Agriculture's website.

Narrative

- Describe any collaborative agreements the SWA has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The RI DLT has partnered with the New England Farm Workers Council to provide increased services to identified MSFWs/SFWs and farm employers. A representative from the New England Farm Workers Council maintains a presence in the Providence NetWORKri One-Stop Career Center to work with staff to identify MSFWs/SFWs and to refer to New England Farm Workers Council as an additional resource to meet their needs. This representative will accompany the Business Workforce Center representatives and the SMA on outreach visits to farm businesses.

One Stop staff will provide all career and job services, including navigating the labor exchange system and refer businesses to the Business Workforce Center to participate in the Agricultural Recruiting System (ARS) and utilize the recruiting available in EmployRI. The labor exchange system provides job openings in both agricultural and non-agricultural employment. There have not been significant numbers of agricultural job opportunities in the past. However, with continued outreach and collaboration with other agricultural organizations, the numbers may increase.

Other services, such as training or supportive services, through the One-Stop Career Center and New England Farm Workers Council and WIA funding will provide a pathway for MSFWs/SFWs to transition to high wage jobs and permanent year round employment in both the agricultural and non-agricultural industries.

All complaints from MSFWs/SFWs regarding violations of employment related standards and laws shall be taken in writing by designated representatives in each One-Stop Career Center and referred to the SMA for timely resolution. The SMA will make referrals as appropriate and cooperate with the US Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division or other appropriate agencies involved in addressing and resolving complaints.

RI DLT SWA and SMA attended the MSFW Monitor Advocate and FLV Coordinator Annual Conference Agenda from September 15th thru 1 September 18th, 2015 in Leesburg, VA. This conference focused on Foreign Labor Certification and the Monitor Advocate roles and responsibilities. In addition, on September 28, 2015, the SWA and SMA, in conjunction with the New England Farm Worker's Council representatives located in the Providence NetWORKri Career Center developed a schedule for the purpose of coordinating outreach efforts. A schedule of contacts and visits was made to provide farm workers with information regarding employment and training services, supportive services and distribute printed NetWORKri materials. Outreach is being accomplished through personal contact, DLT, and the One-Stop Career Centers

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Program Elements

Aligning of Content Standards

- Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

Rhode Island's Board of Education adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education in January 2014, to be used within the state's Adult Education System.

The RI State Office of Adult Education (OAE) supports a statewide literacy resource center, the RI Adult Education Professional Development Center ([PDC](#)), established to improve instruction at all of the AEFLA- and IEL Civics- funded agencies in the state. The PDC has developed, in collaboration with the OAE, a statewide system of professional development to support local activities required under 231 (b), including a specific focus on reading instruction, on contextualized curriculum as a component of a statewide Career Pathways system, on the development of literacy volunteer training and on the increasing ability to virtually share promising practices and research based models.

These efforts will include the continuation of the pilot implementation of standards-based curriculum. This pilot builds upon seven years of scientifically researched standards-based professional development institutes and trainings (TEAL Writing, ANI, Standards in Action, and three cohorts of STAR). The participation in OCTAE-sponsored CCRS training in June 2014 made it clear that simply engaging participants in high quality professional development activities rarely leads to actual, lasting, implementation in the program and at the classroom level. The pilot, begun in 2014-15, has brought the research based practices of Understanding by Design, Proficiency Based Teaching and Learning, and Quality Assessments to programs who had already been trained in standards-based instruction, and combines the workshop activities with a wrap-around professional development design that delineates the intensity and design of how practitioners and their programs enroll in the PD, communicate virtually throughout, and take part in site-visit coaching to address all of the micro and macro barriers to implementing research based change in their practice.

This pilot is following the best practices outlined by the National Implementation Research Network, and evaluated under an Action Research design and is in line with work underway in K-12 in Rhode Island. The focus of the pilot has been the development of a system of instruction and assessment that is based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn, using the CCRS and entails making students aware of their own learning as they progress into mastery of these standards.

By July 2016, the design of future professional development efforts, especially around reading and numeracy, will be established, guided by a team of literacy, program design, numeracy and curriculum experts, as well as OAE. This proven PD design will inform the expectations and requirements of the future WIOA-aligned RFP out of OAE for funding the adult education system in RI.

The national research attached to this pilot, along with support from RIDE leadership, will contribute to developing a scalable model for putting CCRS-standards-based curriculum and instruction into Rhode Island's adult education system.

Local Activities

- Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231 (e) of WIOA, fund each eligible agency provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of local activities.

RIDE will run competitions for its funds under WIOA Title II using the procedures established by the State of Rhode Island for awarding grants or contracts, and the guidance available in the final WIOA regulations as expected to be published by the US Departments of Education and Labor in 2016. The funds will be awarded to eligible providers of services on a basis of three or more years. Eligible providers are organizations that have demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy (AEL) activities. These programs will provide some or all of the WIOA Title II activities as warranted by demographic data within the service area. These programs will function as required core program partners in their respective local One-Stop Center including as a partner in the development of locally-relevant career pathways that reflect employer engagement, with specific entrance points for lower skilled adults. There will be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the operators of the One-Stop Centers and each of their required partners. Adult education programs will adhere to the MOU established between the One-Stop Center operator and RIDE.

Local activities may include some or all of the following:

1. Adult Education and Literacy activities (AEL);
2. Workplace AEL activities;
3. Family literacy activities;
4. English language acquisition (a.k.a. ESL or ESOL) activities;
5. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE);
6. Workforce preparation activities (to impart employability skills which are a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, and self-management skills); and
7. Integrated Education and Training that provides AEL activities concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific, regionally-relevant occupation or occupational cluster, and is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

As required by WIOA section 107 (d)(11)(B)(i), all of the Title II adult education grant proposals will be reviewed by the appropriate local board (either Providence/Cranston or Greater Rhode Island) to determine whether the applications are consistent with the local plan. The local board will then make recommendations to RIDE to promote alignment with the local plan. RIDE will use the thirteen considerations for awarding grants or contracts as described in Section 231 (e) of WIOA:

1. The degree to which the provider would be responsive to regional needs as identified in the Local Plan and serving individuals in the community most in need of AEL activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners;
2. The ability of the provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities;
3. Past effectiveness of the provider in improving the literacy of individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance of the primary indicators of performance and especially with respect to individuals who have low levels of literacy;
4. The extent to which the provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as activities and services of the other one-stop partners;
5. Whether the provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains, and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction;
6. Whether the provider's activities, including reading, writing, speaking, math and English language acquisition instruction are based on best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate; including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice;
7. Whether the provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance;
8. Whether the provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
9. Whether the provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development opportunities, including through electronic means;
10. Whether the provider's activities, coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations,

community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways;

11. Whether the provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, state, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;
12. Whether the provider maintains a high quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance;
13. Whether the local areas in which the provider is located has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from RIDE shall submit an application to RIDE containing such information and assurances as RIDE may require, including:

- A. A description of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title;
- B. A description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities;
- C. A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate;
- D. A description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators;
- E. A description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one-stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate;
- F. A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and
- G. Any information that addresses the 13 considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable.

Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

- Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:
 1. Adult education and literacy activities;

2. Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
3. Secondary school credit;
4. Integrated education and training;
5. Career pathways;
6. Concurrent enrollment;
7. Peer tutoring; and
8. Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Using funds made available under Sec. 222(a)(1), priorities will be focused on increasing the number of incarcerated adults completing a secondary school credential, entering postsecondary education and training, and entering/retaining employment. Adult Basic Skills programs will be offered through the Rhode Island Department of Corrections and include classes in Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency preparation, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

1. Adult Basic Education courses will be provided to students who score below the 9th grade level on a standardized assessment. Reading comprehension, writing, and math skills are emphasized in these classes.
2. High School Equivalency preparation courses will be provided to students who have not attained a high school diploma or the equivalent, and score at least at the 9th grade level, but less than the 12th grade level on a standardized assessment.
3. English as a Second Language courses will provide instruction in speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing skills for offenders whose primary language is a language other than English.
4. Vocational Skills Training programs will be offered as a series of courses or classes necessary to achieve a proficiency standard and obtain certification for employment. The stated goal of this collaborative effort is to develop and implement curriculum that will enhance offenders' success upon release.
5. Participating offenders will be assessed through pre and post testing instruments and individualized education programs will be developed. Core competencies in a computer lab format are made available and will be incorporated into the program design with emphasis geared toward attainment of high school equivalency.
6. Adult Education state staff will continue to be engaged in a process to create responsive, high quality educational and transition programs for incarcerated adults through the RI Governor's Reentry Committee. The mission is to promote successful transition, reduce recidivism and improve practices that create obstacles to successful reentry.
7. The committee is comprised of government entities including the departments of Education, Corrections, Labor and Training, Higher Education, Health and Human Services and Housing, faith and community-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

- Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.
- Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) is defined as “education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training.” IEL/CE funds are allocated to States by the federal government using a model that takes into account the need for services that references adult English language learner demographics for a state and immigration patterns.

It is anticipated that the Rhode Island OAE will receive the same level of funding for the IEL/CE Program and that these funds will be distributed through the larger WIOA Title II RFP competition. IEL/CE funding priority will be for those programs located in communities with significant concentrations of adult English language learners, and operating in partnership with established programs and other community agencies.

Those programs in receipt of IEL/CE funds will be required to deliver programs in combination with other integrated education and training activities. These programs will prepare adults who are English language learners for and place such adults in unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. They will integrate with the local workforce development system, including engaging employers through the local One-Stop center as an adult education partner in order to carry out the activities of the program.

IEL/CE will not be provided in every county or community through this funding source, rather in-state demographics will be consulted and an environmental scan of existing programs undertaken to determine the best way to allocate the funding. Also, the ability to work with partners to accomplish the purposes of IEL/CE will need to be demonstrated in the funding competition.

In consideration of proposals for Integrated English Language and Civics Education funds, the Rhode Island AOE will consider:

1. Whether the local area has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs
2. Whether the program makes use of highly trained instructors including those who hold degrees, credentials, or coursework in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
3. Whether the program has established partnerships with industry

In addition to these considerations for funding are the 13 considerations that are common to all AE providers as pertinent to WIOA Title II and described in the state's response to Section (b) above.

Transitioning to the WIOA model of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education will require funded programs to develop and deliver ELA services concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training with the goal of placing adults into unsubsidized employment in high demand occupations, ultimately leading to economic self-sufficiency.

Local programs funded for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education activities will be required to provide the OAE:

1. An implementation plan detailing the IEL/CE WIOA activities.
2. A description of how IEL/CE funds awarded under AEFLA will be allocated.
3. A description of cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with local one stops and other agencies, institutions, employers or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities.

In order to support implementation of this newer, integrated model, all providers will have access to system-wide professional development on program design, evaluation and continuous improvement.

State Leadership Activities (Sec. 223)

- Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

Eligible adult education providers were required to detail, as part of their 2015-2016 funding renewal application plans, the process that will be used to plan for collaboration with workforce development programs and how they will prepare to align adult basic education programming with partners named in the combined state plan which will include workforce intermediaries. Programs will be required to develop a detailed plan to provide services which will promote concurrent enrollment with Title I and other WIOA core programs and activities in order to meet the state performance targets and collect data to report on performance indicators. In addition, all adult education providers will describe how they will strengthen relationships with local one-stop centers. As members of the two local Workforce Development Boards, two local providers will participate in ongoing plan development and implementation of WIOA.

RIDE Adult Education office staff has taken a lead role in the Rhode Island Career Pathways Advisory Committee (CPAC) with the Governor's Workforce Board staff. The CPAC can be described as a partnership of agencies representing education and training, career development, business and industry, economic development, and other public agencies. The purpose of this partnership is to integrate education and workforce programs and systems toward common goals of increasing workforce credential attainment and expanding the pipeline of skilled workers

ready to enter industry sectors. The CPAC partners are committed to incorporating career pathways models and principles in the implementation of statewide education and workforce development programs.

The mission of the CPAC is to prepare individuals for careers and connect businesses to a skilled workforce. This will be accomplished through service integration by unifying training, education, employment and supportive service programs into a single, customer-focused system across the state of Rhode Island. The Rhode Island career pathways model values employer engagement, customer focus, and data-driven decision making through programs and services that are collaboratively developed by education, workforce, employer and economic development partners.

The Rhode Island 2015 career pathways statewide action plan aligns education and training with higher levels of education; targets regional workforce needs; provides instruction that make work and work readiness a central context for learning; expedites progress towards credentials through methods such as dual enrollment and credit for prior learning and experience; offers scheduling and instructional methods to meet the needs of adult students, such as on the job training, apprenticeships, and flexible and online instruction; focuses on industry-recognized credential attainment, and advises and coaches learners and workers about career and training opportunities and support services. This allows for more flexibility within career pathways work, while still providing a way to connect with State leadership and translate the work of the advisory committee into broader policy.

The CPAC statewide action plan includes activities to create and strengthen policies and programming to ensure the alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs in the workforce system and linkages to employers and community-based organizations. Local adult education programs are represented on the committee and assist with the development of the state's plan to unify content and models for integrated education and training career pathways, and other postsecondary transition models and workplace projects with employers.

Various Legislative and Executive activities in Rhode Island since 2010 have identified Career Pathways as crucial to the improvement of the workforce, and have funded statewide development of a system since then, primarily through the Governor's Workforce Board (the Statewide WIB). Both the Office of Adult Education and the staff of the PDC have been integral in the many stages of planning, piloting, implementing and disseminating pieces of this Career Pathways System (see 13.1.(1)). The initiative will help coach local providers in developing relationships with Industry Partners and employers to develop their own rich workforce development systems (including embedding employability skills in classes and services, using real world documents in the curriculum, utilizing employers for practice interviews, guest speakers, mentors, workplace experiences and employment, and creating Bridge programs to sector specific skill trainings).

Important initiatives to extend this expertise and readiness for WIOA implementation are:

1. The development of a statewide set of standards and understandings of the definition and models of "Integrated Education and Training." This work has begun in the Directors/Managers PLC and in the Case Managers/ Job Developers PLC, and will culminate by January 2016 in a set of guidelines, standards and models for

implementation.

2. The Office of Adult Education will collaborate with the One-Stop partners to provide technical assistance to local eligible providers to make them aware of their responsibilities to provide access to employment, education and training services with an attempt to avoid duplicating services in order to create a more efficient delivery system. It is also essential that the program partners develop a clear, effective, and track-able system of student/client referrals back and forth between adult education providers and the One-Stop partner.

Additional state leadership activities supported by the RI State Office of Adult Education (OAE) include a statewide Adult Education literacy resource center designed to improve instruction and a statewide system of professional development to support local activities required under 231 (b), both facilitated by the Professional Development Center ([PDC](#)), (see section (a))

The PDC website has undergone major redesign, linking it with the Digital Literacy content first developed by Broad Band RI (BBRI) and practitioners of two local programs who have developed curriculum aligned with Minnesota's North Star assessment, and best practices in blended learning and use of Open Educational Resources. The more robust and searchable PDC website has been fully built in 2015-16 to align with the new required activities under WIOA. This will include the Tutor Ready Learning Plans resources which OCTAE has made available for the training of volunteers, as well as references to the local expertise of the Literacy Volunteer agencies that have experience implementing the effective research-based professional development from ProLiteracy. Also available will be the robust online state and national resources for developing career pathways and partnerships with employers, as well as with the nine RI Industry Partners and new Real Jobs RI partnerships representing and working with identified high wage and high demand industries in the state.

The PDC has been the lead in creating the [RI Resource Hub](#), as a part of the collaborative RI Longitudinal Data Systems grant project. This is an online resource with a dual customer focus: easily used by the resident with lower levels of literacy, and by those who work with these residents. It has a direct online link to OAE's CALIS data system, to provide updated information on classes and services available in local AE programs, as well as links to services and trainings from the RI workforce system, and state and national online resources that have been vetted as no cost, free from phishing ads, and of high quality. Its first stage is now complete and user tested, and is maintained by the PDC. The local United Way has funded the *RI Resource Hub* for a transitional year in 2015-16, during which time WIOA aligned resources will be vetted and added, and the ongoing support of this resource will find a home in established agency budgets. Additionally, the DLT has provided Workforce Innovation Funds to RIDE to fund the PDC contract for further enhancements to the RI Resource HUB (the RI Resource HUB On-Ramps to Careers project) which includes creating an online guidance tool that will assist counselors, employers and RI state staff to be able to access reliable and comprehensive online training and education inventory tools. With this tool, Rhode Island expects to achieve better and faster employment outcomes for its residents and to increase the satisfaction of Rhode Island's businesses and industry with the public workforce system.

Ensuring that these high quality resources are online is crucial in this age of on-demand professional development and the need for access to vetted, research-based resources. The PDC website is becoming an important source for the field during this time of transition, as well as the

location of all the resources and tools used by PDC staff and high quality consultants while providing trainings, work-embedded coaching and professional development, and in information sessions about these tools. By July 2016 the plan will be developed for annual dissemination and continual curation of proven models – primarily through an annual calendar which includes standards based initiatives, trainings on required standardized assessments and contextualized curriculum, New Practitioner Orientations (introducing adult learning theory and the AE system), employability skills strategies and instruction, and ongoing Professional Learning Communities of Directors/Managers, Job Developers, Case Managers, ESOL instructors, and the Transitions to College and Careers practitioners.

As a small state, with limited state level resources, it is important to research and curate instructional and programmatic practices from around the country to identify and disseminate those that are the most rigorous and scientifically researched and validated. Two locally developed additions are the pilot implementation of standards based curriculum project described in (2) above, and the eight-year long RI Transitions to College and Careers Initiative. There are eight programs who work with the PDC and with the Transitions Coordinator located at the Community College of RI (CCRI) to develop and share curriculum and program design that were developed to assist learner success and persistence in higher education and in postsecondary training opportunities. Based on research from LaGuardia Community College, Christine Smith, and the analysis of TTC graduates at CCRI, these programs have continued to improve outcomes through sharing best practices and research in a strong Professional Learning Community (PLC) that meets every 6 weeks, and communicates virtually in between.

The PDC and the Office of Adult Education also collaborate to provide technical assistance to programs on high quality data collection and use for program and class level improvement towards meeting statewide federal targets. There have also been three cohorts of Administrators completing the Leadership Excellence Academy, which highlight the use of data and research in continuous program improvement.

The award of Incentive Funds in 2013-2015 was the stimulus to focus previous technology integration efforts into a Technology Advisory Committee which created a set of recommendations for system improvement and the awarding of small “Breakthrough” grants to support local providers’ efforts to upgrade technology and participate in new blended learning and basic digital literacy professional development. Perhaps most importantly, all local providers were required to identify a Technology Point Person who attends quarterly professional development events, and transfers technology information between their program and OAE. There is now an understanding among providers about Consideration 7 in WIOA, and real progress towards utilizing technology to improve their program and staff’s performance, and to improve learner outcomes. One local provider, the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative, has lead the way in creating and co-locating technology and digital trainings and coaching in two public libraries and at the local one-stop. This training includes a digital literacy component leading to North Star Certification for learners and practitioners alike. Fiscal Year 2015-16 will be the third year requiring all local providers to integrate digital literacy assessment and training for all learners, as it has become a key employability and life skill, and 2015-16 will be the first year of implementing a statewide requirement that all staff be proficient with technology in order to help improve program efficiencies.

Assessing Quality

- (A) Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223 (a)(1)(B) of WIOA:
- (B) The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231(b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

RIDE will continue to collect data from its adult education providers pertaining to student demographics, outcomes, and program performance in its web-based database. RIDE will track and report follow-up performance measures relating to employment and post-secondary entrance through data sharing agreements with the core partners, the RI Department of Labor and Training and the Office of Postsecondary Education, as well as with the National Student Clearinghouse database and the GED Testing Services database for GED attainment.

The current student management information system has the full array of National Reporting System (NRS) tables for adult education as well as a variety of customized reports that both the state office as well as local program providers can run to check performance at the program level, teacher level, and student level and determine areas of strengths and weaknesses. The state office has developed an Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Review spreadsheet that acts as a “report card” by capturing the performance outcomes of local providers with real time data. This spreadsheet allows the state office to determine how providers are doing in meeting and exceeding the state’s negotiated core indicator of performance targets. Results for education functioning level gains and follow-up outcome measures are calculated and then weighted by the number of students in each level, or cohort group, and converted into a final percentage expressing the provider’s ability in meeting or exceeding the core indicator targets.

Program performance that is on target will be acknowledged and celebrated. Program performance that does not meet targets will receive the timely attention of the state office. On-site program monitoring reviews will be scheduled for programs that have EFL performance levels below 80% of the statewide targets. A program improvement plan will be established in collaboration with the local provider. Targeted technical assistance, further training and support in relation to these plans of improvement will be delivered to the program. High quality professional development opportunities as required within State Leadership activities are to be aligned with areas of program need based on their performance. Particular attention will be paid to reading strategies and English as a Second Language strategies. Past performance will be taken into account in awarding funds as required through AEFLA funding competitions.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Elements

RI DHS/Office of Rehabilitation Services

Input of State Rehabilitation Council.

1. ORDER OF SELECTION:

SRC COMMENT:

In the past, ORS was able to serve all eligible individuals. However, as need for services grew, coupled with the need to provide for better employment outcomes for eligible customers, ORS has had to use an Order of Selection and place individuals on a waitlist. ORS has done very well to make efforts to serve all its eligible customers, and also has done a good job in keeping the wait list relatively short and reducing wait times.

In reviewing changes to WIOA, the SRC policy committee noted an important change to the law allowing ORS to exercise its discretion to open up an Order of Selection category for individuals who are were working but who might need VR services to maintain employment. The SRC recognized that VR services might be the defining moment for a person to either keep his/her employment or lose it. We encouraged ORS to exercise its discretion under WIOA and provide an exception for what we anticipated may only be a small subset of individuals. Of course, we recognized that ORS would have to determine whether it could use existing resources before committing to it and adding it to its State Plan. We are pleased that very quickly after we raised this issue with ORS, and prior to the State Plan draft, ORS informed the SRC that they were going to incorporate this into their State Plan.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS concurred with the SRC about the benefits of acting on its discretion to provide services to individuals on the wait list who are presently employed and require vocational rehabilitation services in order to maintain employment in an integrated competitive setting.

2. TRANSITION:

SRC COMMENT:

WIOA has a renewed focus on transition aged youth. For many years, the SRC has been interested in transition aged youth as we have recognized that early supports and job exploration opportunities that allow for personal growth and maturity are hallmarks to success as adults. The SRC had a transition committee that provided input to ORS as needed. We applaud ORS for its development of projects and work opportunities for this population before the changes to WIOA renewed the commitment to this population. As a result of its efforts, ORS has (as of FFY2011) exceeded the national average of serving transition aged youth. ORS thus has a head start with transition aged youth, but the work is far from done. ORS has a longstanding cooperative arrangement with entities that serve in-school youth.

Under WIOA, the focus is also on out-of-school youth. The SRC thinks more efforts may be needed to locate the out-of-school youth. ORS may need to think of additional strategies to outreach to this population. We urge ORS to do so.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS has a well-developed Transition Program for in-school youth. The SRC's concern about identification and engagement of young adults not affiliated with a formal educational setting is an area that could be included in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA).

3. COORDINATION WITH NONPROFITS, EDUCATION OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYERS:

SRC COMMENT:

The SRC made several recommendations regarding interagency cooperation and coordination with other entities. At this point ORS has not, pursuant to Attachment 4.2(c) addressed many of these recommendations. Among our recommendations included that ORS update broken links on its website. We also suggested that ORS review its expired MOU between it and RIDE as well as other MOU partners. In addition, we look forward to working with ORS on the revised Comprehensive Needs Assessment to capture WIOA expectations and employer needs. With regard to coordination with employers, we assisted ORS in framing goals. As this is a new attachment, we look forward to hearing more about ORS efforts to create new pilot projects such as Project Search expansion and additional partnerships with businesses. We continue to be interested in ORS serving as a leader in requiring Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to deliver services consistent with the spirit of WIOA. We are interested in ORS efforts to modify fee structures, expand upon the competence of CRPs, and other efforts to change the culture to one that has an expectation that all services should ultimately culminate in competitive employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Again, many of these issues were addressed in our January 19, 2016 communication to ORS.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS will examine its web-site to identify and correct errors or problems.

ORS and RIDE have discussed the need to renew the Cooperative Agreement (CA) and will be exercising the option to continue the agreement via a letter of agreement. Both ORS and RIDE want to have the opportunity to examine what changes, based on WIOA and experience, need to be included in a new CA.

Business Engagement is a new performance measure and expectation of RSA. ORS plans to enlist Technical Assistance offered by our funding source as well as collaboration with partners. However, enlisting the SRC to help ORS include this new deliverable service as part of our C.N.A. would be very helpful. In addition, quite a few members of the SRC have considerable expertise in this area and could provide guidance. Their knowledge and competence was acutely apparent in the development of several attachments of the state plan.

4. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT:**SRC COMMENT:**

The SRC fully believes that, regardless of disability, all individuals can benefit from competitive and integrated employment if they have the appropriate support services. However, these services are needed over a long period of time in some cases. With changes to WIOA, ORS can now provide twenty-four months of supported employment services instead of eighteen months. However, the SRC remains concerned about the longer term for these individuals. Many years ago, we strongly encouraged ORS to be a leader to set the tone for its CRPs. In response, ORS created a fee structure with the expectation that CRPs would be finding competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. We believe this is still the case- that ORS can be a leader- and continue to set the tone for this expectation. More funding avenues for longer term supports may need to be identified as time progresses, but we are hopeful that the change in the law to a longer period of time will be helpful in the interim.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS agrees with the SRC's confidence in our ability to provide leadership and creativity to an

important employment service for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

However, I think it is important to measure that confidence with the recognition that ORS does have limitations in its scope of authority in changing the priorities and objectives of other agencies.

5. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT:

SRC COMMENT:

The SRC strongly agrees with the requirement that all new VR Counselors possess a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. We believe that this will attract the best new talent to the agency. ORS should post its new VR Counselor job openings with the area colleges.

In addition, the SRC suggested that ORS explore paid internships with these colleges, and we are pleased that ORS will be exploring this possibility. We remain interested in learning about the agency's strategies to recruit and retain personnel from diverse cultural backgrounds and how these strategies have been working.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS agrees with SRC suggestions.

6. CONFLICTS AND CLIENT RIGHTS:

SRC COMMENT:

The SRC has long suggested that ORS policies retain consistent language used in federal law. Client rights information being removed from policies as has been done in recent changes to ORS policies is strongly disfavored by the SRC. At the core of ORS is a guiding body of law and its terms, vision, spirit and directives should be preserved and replicated within ORS policies and in its State Plan. Going forward, we will continue to advocate along these lines, and have been disappointed in the ORS response to our concerns.

ORS RESPONSE:

As stated previously, ORS appreciates the SRC's concern regarding removal of the Procedure section of the policy and access to information about the Client Assistance Program (CAP). The removal of procedures is in direct response to the Governor's Office, OHHS and DHS position. In addition, a review of several other VR agencies Policy Manuals indicated that the procedural steps of implementing a policy were not consistently incorporated into that document. ORS wants to reassure the SRC that the agency will continue to ensure client access to information about client rights and the CAP through the intake process, in conjunction with IPE development and/or Amendment, communication about denial of services as well as at case closure notification. In addition, CAP information will be posted within the agency and on the ORS web-site.

ORS is striving to make agency policies helpful to our clients. The regulations do not require that agency policy mirror the language of federal regulations. All policies reference the appropriate law that serves as the foundation for the policy.

7. AGENCY MARKETING:

SRC COMMENT:

The SRC comments have been replete with questions and suggestions about marketing efforts. We have asked how ORS will market to expand upon vendor competence, how it will outreach to transition aged youth, how it will market to attract new interested business partnerships, and how it will market to attract new talent to its own agency. ORS' need to continue to create more visibility to potential employees, new vendors, new customers, and to new businesses cannot be understated. WIOA expects outcomes and delivery in a streamlined fashion. The SRC recognizes that the changes presented are not all ironed out for ORS and remains committed to helping the agency where we can to effectuate its mission that all individuals, regardless of disability, can work in a competitive integrated setting if they have the right supports. We look forward to the future.

ORS RESPONSE:

ORS had a marketing committee that partnered with the SRC Marketing committee. However, the agency marketing committee faltered due to staff turnover and competing demands. The SRC Marketing Committee was disbanded.

ORS agrees with the SRC that a focus on marketing is critical. I wonder if the SRC would consider resurrecting the Sub- committee on Marketing to assist ORS in enhancing our visibility to potential employers.

(a) 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.

- Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to:
- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- State programs carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
- Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;
- Non educational agencies serving out-of-school youth
- State use contracting programs.

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) collaborates with programs and agencies providing services that will assist an individual with a disability to establish and reach an employment goal. Types of agencies that ORS works with include: hospitals, medical and disability support organizations, educational institutions (both public and private), professional associations, domestic violence and homeless shelters, community centers, community mental health agencies, substance abuse treatment facilities, Department of Labor and Training, private medical offices, federal agencies, private businesses, and advocacy groups.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) have been negotiated with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Institutions of Higher Education (IHE - Rhode Island College, University of Rhode Island and Community College of Rhode Island), Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), and the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH).

In order to enhance the recruitment of qualified rehabilitation counselors, ORS has a Memorandum of Understanding with Assumption College and Salve Regina University to provide practicum and internship opportunities to graduate level Rehabilitation Counseling students.

ORS has cultivated a strong working relationship with independent living centers to augment our vocational rehabilitation services. The IL centers have the ability to provide support services, transportation training, advocacy services, home assessments, independent living skills/assistive technology assessment, and information and referral services to adults, out of school and in-school youth.

In order to enhance these working relationships, ORS assigns Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to function as liaisons to various community agencies.

ORS has been the lead agency for the state AT Grant since its inception. In this role, ORS has facilitated a program called the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). This partnership relies on contractual relationships with Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), TechAccess of RI, and East Bay Educational Collaborative to provide the array of deliverables offered by the AT Grant, including device loans, demonstrations, device re-use, education, and referral services. In addition, ORS operates a state-funded program called the Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL) program that is also included in the ATAP partnership. Through this leadership role, ORS is able to enlist ATAP services for ORS clients who need access to device loans and re-use for vocational assessments and/or work experiences. In addition, ATAP in conjunction with the Business Leadership Network (BLN) and at times with the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), provides training to ORS Rehabilitation Counselors about assistive technology and the services of the program

4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials.

Describe:

- the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

- information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
- consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
- transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
- roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
- procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

This attachment addresses coordination with Education Officials. Therefore, it is important to highlight that ORS has formal agreements with (1) RI Department of Education (RIDE) for in-school youth, and (2) an MOU with the state institutions of higher learning for out of high school youth in college.

The specific policies that guide ORS practice in terms of referrals, eligibility determination, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), services, and training for adult and youth are located in the agency Policy Manual, which can be accessed through the ORS website www.ors.ri.gov.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) for In-School Youth

The plans and procedures for coordination with RIDE and ORS, an RSA Best Practice, has been the foundation of a collaborative relationship focused on school-to-work transition for over 16 years. This collaboration has enabled ORS to have an MA level Rehabilitation Counselor at each high school to provide an array of services that were formerly referred to as Transition Services to the new WIOA term of Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). The Cooperative Agreement describes interagency collaboration and coordination, the role and responsibilities of each partner and the process for resolving disagreements. In addition, a Collaborative Services Chart (CSC) identifies the agency primarily responsible for services in each of the following categories: Assessment Services, Career Development Services, Community Living Services, Related Services and Auxiliary Services.

The ORS Rehabilitation Counselor in each high school or Local Education Authority (LEA) assists in planning transition activities, provides technical assistance, and consults with school personnel about youth with IEPs, 504 plans, as well as vocational planning. The LEA identifies students with disabilities, who may be eligible for transition services with ORS, consults with the ORS Rehabilitation Counselor and facilitates a formal referral to the agency with parental approval.

The referral to ORS from the LEA, with parental consent, is the first step in the referral process. The ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor then conducts an intake meeting with the youth

and family to explain services, the eligibility determination process, and the purpose of the program. This creates the foundation for ORS Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS), under the auspices of the Agreement between ORS and RIDE, to in-school youth with disabilities - in collaboration with each Local Education Authority (LEA). These transition services fall under the regulations outlined in the 2014 Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) to help to prepare students for employment after high school. The Office of Rehabilitation Services strives to assist all students with significant disabilities to gain the necessary skills, preparation, exploration and supports to enter the workforce. Incorporated into the ORS PETS Program is an expectation that all students who are found eligible for services will have an ORS approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) developed within 90 days of eligibility. This IPE establishes an employment goal and the steps/services needed to reach that goal. An IPE developed in high school will often change as the student learns more about themselves and has work experiences prior to school graduation.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) will focus on employment related information and services to in-school youth with significant disabilities that have an IEP or 504 plan. PETS will also be provided to students with significant intellectual disabilities as the state of Rhode Island is obligated to provide an array of transition services - based on a Department of Justice (DOJ) Consent Decree (CD)/Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA).

ORS and each local education authority collaborate to meet the transition needs of youth with significant disabilities. Each high school has an identified ORS Rehabilitation Counselor as a liaison available to consult, provide technical assistance, review student progress, attend IEP meetings, and accept referrals. In addition, the DOJ requires each high school to develop career development plans on all in-school youth with IDD beginning at age fourteen and reviewed annually. ORS contributes to this process through Rehabilitation Counselor attendance and/or consultation to the transition team meetings. A referral system is in place for students with disabilities and each fall ORS, in collaboration with the Regional Educational Collaboratives, provides an orientation to Special Education staff at each Rhode Island High School. PETS services include: Counseling & Guidance, Vocational Evaluations and Assessments, Community Based Work Experiences, Transition Academy participation, Summer Work, ORS/LEA Community Employment Projects. These PETS are provided based on the individualized needs of each student as identified by the team, family and student. Any work activities already completed by the LEA such as volunteer positions, work tryouts and internships provide valuable information to the discussion and planning process. These activities are considered trial work experiences so are important to vocational planning.

The DOJ court order requires in-school youth with IDD to have had an opportunity to experience 120 days of trial work experiences. Therefore, PETS incorporates a review with the CDP team of any community/work experiences that have occurred. The team, including the student and family, determine the additional school/home/community experience needed to augment the employment exploration services already provided by the LEA. These ORS opportunities may include such services as: Community Based Work Experiences, Transition Academies, Summer Employment Alliance, Summer Work, Project Search, and other work activities. This information will assist the team and the ORS Counselor in achieving the 120 day Trial Work Experience mandate of the Consent Decree.

In addition to the school-based interventions and consultation with the LEA, ORS is involved in each region's Transition Advisory Council (TAC), the statewide Transition Council, and a myriad of other system development efforts to enhance work experiences and transition for youth.

Training Services for Out of School Youth

ORS develops IPEs with youth within 90 days of eligibility determination. The IPE establishes an occupational goal for the individual that is updated prior to completion of high school. This IPE also establishes if employment, training, and/or college will be required to reach that occupational goal.

ORS has fee-for-service arrangements for service arrangements with job developers that can be enlisted to assist the individual in obtaining a job or the training required for the job goal. This fee-for-service structure enables youth to receive the services and/or training necessary to transition to employment.

In addition, ORS may support youth in obtaining the educational credentials required for the IPE goal. In support of ORS customers attending state colleges, ORS has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the three state institutions of higher education: Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and the University of Rhode Island (URI). The MOU clarifies the role of each partner in fostering a seamless delivery system intended to support DHS/ORS customers attending post-secondary programs. It also defines the financial parameters for each partner in a cost-sharing formula for support services, accommodations, and assistive technology for post-secondary students with an active Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with ORS.

4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations.

- Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) will continue to develop fee-for-service agreements with a wide network of private vocational rehabilitation providers in order to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. An identified need, as determined by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), labor market information, or by the individualized needs of customers, will initiate efforts to create a new service or training option. However, training programs must demonstrate that employment in the field is identified by industry sectors as illustrated by the GWB strategic goals and Real Jobs RI. Fee-for-service agreements incorporate a similar process with the Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) being funded based upon authorization, service provision, and competitive employment outcomes. ORS will utilize the information from the FFY2014 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) as a foundation for expansion and/or development of new fee-for-service agreements that meet the employment needs of customers and businesses. In FFY 2016/2017, a revised Comprehensive Needs Assessment will be completed that captures WIOA expectations of employer needs.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee will work with the CRP Supervisor to develop increased options for individuals with disabilities who are considered underserved and/or minority populations based on the CNA findings. In addition, ongoing Quality Improvement activities such as the satisfaction surveys are developed and implemented by the SRC State Plan and Continuous Quality Improvement Committee. These studies, organized by the ORS Strategic Planning Supervisor, provides ongoing information that is relevant to customers' vocational rehabilitation needs and planning.

ORS has a long-standing history of cultivating a productive collaboration between ORS, CRPs, and the netWORKri One-Stop system. It is anticipated that this effort will continue through FFY2017. ORS, through its parent agency, Rhode Island Department of Human Services and as required by WIOA, is a financial and programmatic partner with Rhode Island netWORKri One-Stop Centers. ORS counselors have designated days and times at each of the One-Stop Centers in order to provide access to ORS services including applications, counseling, information and referral, and placement services. This is also where counselors have the opportunity to re-enforce that ORS is a resource to procure skills needed for today's workforce. ORS is another resource for eligible customers to align with Real Jobs RI. ORS personnel attend monthly statewide Employer Services Network meetings at the Providence/Cranston One-Stop Career Center/netWORKri. In addition, ORS personnel, through the Assistive Technology grant (ATAP), provide consultation and training to the One-Stop staff on disability issues, accessibility considerations, and assistive technology. ORS has two Memorandums of Understanding with the RI Workforce Investment Board that defines the relationship between ORS and the One Stop Centers. In addition, ORS personnel are members of each of the two regional workforce investment boards (WIB): Providence/Cranston Workforce Solutions and Greater Rhode Island Workforce Partnerships. Each WIB has a Youth Board that ORS personnel attend and also participate in annual Request for Proposal reviews.

RI has two Workforce Investment Boards (WIB). Recently ORS became an active participant in the Disability Committee required by WIOA - both WIBs agreed to combine their Disability Sector Committee into one state-wide entity in order to maximize resource involvement.

4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

- Describe the designated State Agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities; including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) continues to provide supported employment services, as requirements of WIOA and the Department of Justice settlements, as a means to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities. ORS has maintained involvement with two Supported Employment (SE) Advisory Councils, representation on the Developmental Disabilities Council, and the RI Transition Council.

In FFY2017, ORS will continue to partner with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) of supported employment services so that customers can make informed choices about integrated competitive employment options through real work experiences. ORS sponsors and provides ongoing training and technical assistance to the supported employment CRPs. Training on supported employment regulations, policy, and core values has occurred with staff of ORS and with CRPs to increase participation in provision of the ORS Supported Employment program. ORS, as a leader, trainer, and funding source of supported employment services, engages community resources to provide the extended supports that help sustain employment for individuals with significant disabilities. Long-term supports are planned for and included in the customers' ORS Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These plans are individualized and define the scope and duration of each supported employment service. The IPE also identifies the CRP accepting responsibility to provide long term and intermittent support services to the individual with a disability. This shift in service delivery responsibility is well coordinated by the ORS counselor and CRP agency staff/long-term support provider so that there will be seamless access to the supports needed to sustain employment.

The time frame for transitioning an individual from the support services of both ORS and the CRP to the extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer. ORS has been working with CRPs who provide Supported Employment Services to improve the quality and availability of employment-related services.

ORS will continue to encourage CRPs to collaborate with each other, through a quarterly meeting sponsored by ORS, to meet the diverse employment needs of significantly disabled individuals with intellectual and behavioral health issues. This collaboration is also encouraged at individual and joint meetings of the BHDDH, Divisions of DD and BH Supported Employment Councils. Some ORS customers not eligible for the long term supports provided by DD or BH agencies have significant functional limitations and could benefit from the supports and job coaching expertise of SE agencies, with an overall goal of increasing integrated, competitive employment outcomes. SE customers have increased the average number of hours employed, however, ORS is continuing to work with staff and vendors on improving the quality of the jobs, salary, and benefits for its' supported employment population. A new service delivery model and fee structure was designed and implemented on 4/1/2013 and will be modified in FFY2017.

The state of RI recently negotiated a Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure that Employment First principles and practices are utilized in planning and service delivery to adults, in-school youth, and out-school youth with significant intellectual disabilities (I/DD) who need access to the continuum of Supported Employment Services in order to work. The DOJ court order requires three state agencies: (1) Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), (2) the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and (3) the Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to develop and implement a service delivery system that ensures individuals, adults and youth, with I/DD have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities in order to make fully informed choices about work. The three state agencies are developing Cooperative Agreements, Data Exchange Agreements, and joint Continuous Quality Improvement efforts as elements/requirements of the CD and ISA.

The three state entities have created a Transition time line for staff, families, and school personnel to clarify each agencies' obligations to implement the DOJ requirements for in-school youth. ORS has had a Cooperative Agreement with RIDE for over 16 years. This agreement is the foundation for ORS to have a MA level Rehabilitation Counselor at each high school in the state. The ORS Rehabilitation Counselor functions as a liaison, consultant, and referral source to the transition personnel of each high school in the state. ORS has been providing a wide array of transition services (PETS) since the inception of the Cooperative Agreement. The array of services for in-school youth with disabilities include: Vocational Evaluations and Assessments; Community Based Work Experiences; support of participation in Transition Academies and ORS/LEA Summer Employment experiences; Summer Work; Project Search; and other work activities. ORS, according to the DOJ Consent Decree, is responsible for ensuring youth with I/DD have a 120-day Trial Work Experience prior to leaving high school.

The array of transition services in place for both in-school youth with disabilities, as well as for youth eligible for supported employment services, meet the requirements of WIOA for PETS and the DOJ service requirements for in-school youth with I/DD.

4.8(b)(5) Coordination with Employers.

- Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:
 - VR Services;
 - Transition Services, including pre-employment transition services for students and youth with disabilities

I. **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) has several existing partnerships and services that involve the business community. Employer Based Skill Evaluation (EBSE), a partnership between ORS and specific businesses, provides up to three months' salary subsidized work experience in a particular career interest area of the client. This service provides a unique opportunity for ORS to assess an individual's work skills and behaviors within a business environment. The employer provides feedback to the agency and the client about their skills and potential in a particular occupation. Some of these assessments have resulted in a job match, while others have provided information to justify on-going education/training in the field or in some cases exploration of alternate careers. In addition, ORS participates in On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Community-Based Work Experiences (CBWE) opportunities.

ORS partners with a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) to identify the specific training needs of a large and growing business. The training, almost a boot camp model, that results from this collaboration occurs within the actual business facility and prepares job candidates for the exact skill set required by the employer, and thus a successful job match. The partnership not

only offers community integrated competitive employment opportunities for ORS customers, but it is also producing a qualified and specifically trained pool of candidates for a local business.

The Workforce Development Supervisor has developed more than 30 business partners with a myriad of companies in Rhode Island. When provided with job openings from these partners, alerts are forwarded to the 45 counselors who share this information with appropriate job seekers. Once a qualified job seeker has applied and after a confidential release has been obtained, ORS contacts the employer and job develops on the qualified job seeker's behalf.

II. **PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PETS):**

As a component of the PETS program, ORS, in collaboration with other partners, has instituted several Project Search programs within the health care industry sector. The state emphasis and commitment to *Employment First* principles for individuals with significant intellectual disabilities has helped to facilitate RI Project Search becoming a reality. The first Miriam Hospital Project Search - 2014, was so successful, that the program was replicated with Blue Cross in 2015, and is planning to further expand to an additional site in 2016.

In addition, ORS funds summer work experiences for youth since 2010. All of these work experiences are in integrated community based work settings at minimum wage or above.

III. **COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT:**

ORS will be conducting a state-wide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) in collaboration with the SRC in 2016. This CNA will incorporate a component related to the needs of the business community and create a foundation for developing new and innovative training and services specific to those needs. As part of the design for the CNA, ORS will also consult with the WIOA partners.

IV. **MARKETING/OUTREACH STRATEGY:**

Over the next year, ORS will enlist its state partners and the SRC to develop a marketing plan that targets specific business sectors. Collaboration with the Governor's Workforce Board, the WIBs, RIDE, and DLT will be critical as the state moves to implement the Comprehensive System Change Plan (CSIP).

- 4.8(b)(6) Interagency Cooperation.

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the state agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable”

- The state Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;
- The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;
- The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

ORS has a working relationship with each of the entities referenced in this attachment.

THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT:

Rhode Island has a work incentive program called the Sherlock Plan which enables individuals with significant disabilities to maintain Medicaid while working. The Sherlock Plan is administered by the Department of Human Services. However, the complexities of increased income on other benefits such as the Developmental Disability agency’s service cost share, subsidized housing, and food stamps requires considerable coordination among the state agencies. ORS participates on a monthly case coordination team that examines the Sherlock Plan.

In addition, the Department of Justice Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) require all individuals with significant intellectual disabilities receive a complete Benefit Analysis by a Benefits Counselor. ORS is working with Medicaid and Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to examine how the service can be reimbursed by Medicaid.

THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES:

ORS has a long standing history of collaboration with the RI agency responsible for services to individuals with developmental disabilities – Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH). ORS funds an array of Supported Employment services for adults and youth with Developmental Disabilities through a fee-for-service arrangement with a network of ORS approved Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). Many of these Supported Employment (SE) CRPs are also licensed by BHDDH to provide residential, case management, and support services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

ORS continues to provide supported employment services as a means to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities. ORS sponsors and participates in the Supported Employment Advisory Council

for Developmental Disabilities, and has a representative on the Developmental Disabilities Council.

ORS has a referral, liaison and consultative relationship with the CRPs and funds a continuum of Supported Employment services, through the customer selected CRP. The objective of the SE services is in integrated competitive employment as an outcome. ORS, as a leader, trainer, and funding source of supported employment services, engages CRPs - who also rely on BHDDH funding - to provide the long-term supports that help sustain employment for individuals with significant developmental disabilities. Long-term supports are planned for and included in the customers' ORS Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These plans are individualized and define the scope and duration of each supported employment service. The IPE also identifies the CRP accepting responsibility to provide long term and intermittent support services to the individual with a disability. The time frame for transitioning a customer from the support services of both ORS and the CRP to the extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer. ORS has been working with CRPS who provide Supported Employment Services to improve the quality and availability of employment related services. As the funding source ORS holds a quarterly meeting with all of the I/DD Supported Employment CRP's to ensure consistency in service delivery, appropriate employment outcomes are being reached and to offer support and

The state of RI recently negotiated a Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure that Employment First Principles and practices are utilized in planning and service delivery to adults, in-school youth, and out-school youth with significant intellectual disabilities (I/DD) who need access to the continuum of Supported Employment Services in order to work. The DOJ court order requires three state agencies: (1) Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), (2) the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and (3) the Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to develop and implement a service delivery system that ensures individuals, both adults and youth, with I/DD have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities in order to make fully informed choices about work. The three state agencies are obligated by the DOJ settlement to develop Cooperative Agreements, Data Exchange Agreements, and joint Continuous Quality Improvement efforts as elements/requirements of the CD and ISA.

THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

ORS has a long standing history of collaboration with the RI agency responsible for services to individuals with mental health issues – Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). ORS funds an array of Supported Employment services for adults and youth with Behavioral Health issues through a fee-for-service arrangement with a network of ORS-approved Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). Many of these Supported Employment CRPs are also licensed by BHDDH to provide support services to individuals with behavioral health disabilities.

ORS continues to provide supported employment services as a means to enable individuals with

the most significant disabilities to have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities. ORS sponsors and participates in the Supported Employment Advisory Council for Behavioral Health, and has MA level Rehabilitation Counselors function as liaisons to these agencies that offer SE services to individuals with behavioral health issues.

ORS has a referral, liaison, and consultative relationship with the CRPs and funds a continuum of Supported Employment services, through the customer selected CRP, that are expected to culminate in integrated competitive employment outcomes. ORS, as a leader, trainer, and funding source of supported employment services, engages CRPs - who rely on BHDDH funding - to provide the long term supports that help sustain employment for individuals with significant developmental disabilities. Long-term supports are planned for and included in the customers' ORS Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These plans are individualized and define the scope and duration of each supported employment service. The IPE also identifies the CRP accepting responsibility to provide long term and intermittent support services to the individual with a disability. The time frame for transitioning a customer from the support services of both ORS and the CRP to the extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer. ORS has been working with CRPS who provide Supported Employment Services to improve the quality and availability of employment related services. As the funding source ORS holds a quarterly meeting with all of the I/DD Supported Employment CRP's to ensure consistency in service delivery, appropriate employment outcomes are being reached and to offer support and guidance to the providers.

- 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development.

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development. Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

- Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- (i) the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- (ii) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

- (iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- (A) a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;
- (B) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- (C) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

ORS has sought to recruit and retain qualified staff for all positions within the agency. Such incentives as assistance with CRC maintenance credits and ongoing professional training and support are intended to retain the staff. In addition, ORS has cultivated a relationship with local colleges and universities for Rehabilitation Counselor internship opportunities.

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS:

In FFY2015, ORS provided services to approximately 5,061 individuals, with an average caseload of 115. ORS has a total of 92 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, which includes 44 MA level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions. ORS has continued to recruit and hire Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for vacancies when they arise. All new counselors have Master's Degrees in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling.

During FFY2015, 6 ORS staff retired or left the agency. Several promotions resulted in vacancies in a VR Counselor I position, a VR Supervisor position, and 2 VR Counselor II positions. One of the VRC II positions has been filled, and the other is in the process of being filled. ORS also had vacancies in the following positions: Human Services Business Officer, Information Aide, Senior Word Processing Typist, and Property Control/Supply Clerk.

Over the next 3 to 5 year period, ORS estimates that approximately 10-15 individuals (administrators, supervisors, counselors and support staff) will be eligible for retirement. Given the number of employees that could potentially leave state service, ORS is actively pursuing graduate students for internships with ORS via the Rehabilitation Counseling programs from local universities and colleges.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I	29	2	3
2	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II	14	1	3
3	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf	1	1	0
4	Supervisory	13	1	2
5	Administrative	7	1	1
6	Fiscal	6	0	1
7	Case Aide	3	0	1

8	Support Staff	9	3	1
9	Social Services	6	0	1
10	Direct Services	4	0	1

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT:

ORS has cultivated a relationship with two area colleges that offer graduate training in Rehabilitation Counseling: Assumption College in Worcester, MA and Salve Regina University in Newport, RI. There are approximately 139 students enrolled in the graduate programs (84 at Assumption College and 55 at Salve Regina University).

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Assumption College	84	0	0	32
2	Salve Regina University	55	0	9	14

3		0	0	0	0
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H. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel.

- Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

I. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

ORS has ongoing communication with Assumption College and Salve Regina University, both offer an MA in Rehabilitation Counseling via a combination of on-campus and distance learning, to ensure that the present and projected needs of ORS are considered in the program planning.

ORS provides both practicum and internship opportunities for local graduate students. In FFY2015, ORS had five graduate students. Of the three from Salve Regina University and the two from Assumption College, three of the interns were hired by ORS. Currently ORS has one intern from Salve Regina University. ORS participates on the Advisory Board for the Rehabilitation Counseling Graduate Program at Salve Regina University and University of Massachusetts.

For FFY2017, ORS plans to explore increasing ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor supervisory capacity, funding for payment to interns, and availability of internship acceptance from Salve Regina University, Assumption College, and University of Massachusetts.

ORS plans to participate in the Salve Regina University initiative to provide supervisory training for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors providing internship supervision. Staff are hired in accordance with the Department of Human Services affirmative action policies. Job announcements are distributed to community-based agencies with the intent of attracting qualified individuals, particularly individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds. For FFY2017, ORS will explore facilitating job posting with Salve Regina University, Assumption College, and UMass Job openings are also advertised through the State of Rhode Island “ApplyRI website”.

ORS has recruited and retained a number of qualified individuals with disabilities (visual impairments, Deafness, psychiatric/ emotional, physical disabilities, etc.) and minority backgrounds (7 - bi-lingual case aides and counselors). ORS actively recruits graduate students with disabilities and minority backgrounds for the practicum and internship program. ORS has

had 29 graduate students for practicum/internships over the past few years, of which 20 were hired as Rehabilitation Counselors, all with Masters Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling.

ORS will continue to explore long-term strategies in FFY2017 for recruitment and retention of personnel from diverse cultural backgrounds.

II. Personnel Standards

- (a) *Personnel Standards*. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:
- (1) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
 - (2) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

ADEQUATELY PREPARED AND TRAINED STAFF

Rhode Island does not have a state approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration requirements for Rehabilitation Counselors. The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services has elected to base its minimum personnel standards for recruitment of counselors on the requirement of a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. ORS will continue to monitor any state efforts for licensure of Rehabilitation Counselors.

During FFY2013 ORS piloted a program to encourage and fund counselors to pursue their CRC, which has resulted in nine VR Counselors receiving their CRC. At present ORS has 25 VR Counselors, Supervisors and Administrators who are CRC certified, and has one VR Counselor currently pursuing their CRC. ORS will explore the feasibility of continuing to sponsor VRC staff acquisition of the CRC.

Rehabilitation Counselors are highly encouraged to obtain the State of RI Qualified Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. ORS has assigned an Administrator and Supervisor to the Department of Human Services RAMPS team which has a focus on succession planning and recruitment. (RAMPS is a long-term project that attempts to install both "off ramp" (exit processes, knowledge retention & succession development) and "on ramp" (on-boarding and orientation) programs and policies for the Department.) All new Rehabilitation Counselors are required to meet the standard of a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from an accredited program.

ORS has been able to meet the CSPD standard of filling all VR Counselor vacancies with individuals with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and expects to be able to continue to meet this standard. Through the practicum/internships, involvement on Advisory Boards, and speaking with students in MA Rehabilitation programs, ORS has worked

aggressively with the institutions of higher education to recruit qualified individuals to fill vacancies ORS will continue to fill all fiscal and support staff vacancies with individuals who meet state requirements for education and experience.

Training opportunities are provided on an ongoing basis to ensure that staff have the most current information on the labor market, best practices and assistive technology.

Since December 2009, all ORS Rehabilitation Counselors hired have met the Rhode Island standard (100% compliance) of a Master's level in Rehabilitation Counseling. All field VR Supervisors and Administrators meet the CSPD standard. ORS continues to dedicate financial and Training Coordinator time to support the CSPD plan. ORS is structuring mentoring activities around specific specialization areas in anticipation of future retirements. All existing fiscal and support staff meet or exceed state requirements for education and experience.

III. *Staff Development.*

- Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:
 - i. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
 - ii. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

IV. **STAFF DEVELOPMENT:**

ORS recognizes the importance of ensuring that staff have the necessary skills and abilities to provide quality services in a professional and timely manner. Examples of areas identified for training included: Motivational Interviewing, Substance Abuse, Ethics in Rehabilitation Counseling, disability specific training, Cultural Diversity, Supported Employment, Ticket to Work, Relationship building with the business community, Social Security Reimbursements, Employment Networks Partnership Plus, 21 Century Best Practices for Job Development and Placement for VR staff, as well as for VR Vendors.

The development of a monthly support group for Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors providing supervision to interns from Salve Regina University and Assumption College is planned.

In order to retain qualified staff and in anticipation of additional staff retirement, ORS has and will continue to offer leadership development training, succession planning, and capacity building opportunities to interested staff. Management staff has included interested personnel in activities such as: assistive technology, transition, training, CRP development, quality assurance, and strategic planning as a means of expanding agency knowledge base about these content areas.

Of forty-four Rehab Counselors, eight have been on the job for less than 5 years; thus necessitating the training on rehabilitation basic, best practices, and ORS policies and procedures.

ORS believes that the next 3-5 year period is a critical time to assist newer counselors and supervisory personnel in professional development and growth to transition into positions of increased responsibility. Explore ways to best cultivate available staff resources within the agency in the role of Business Ambassadors, agency marketers, advocates, and educators to the business community.

ORS relies on supervisory observations, quality assurance reviews, and self-identified training needs to enhance professional development. The Training Coordinator elicits input from counselors, supervisors, support staff, and administrators regarding their training needs.

If a Corrective Action Plan around personnel performance is necessary, the Corrective Action Plan would be in compliance with the CSPD, ORS policy & procedures, and union regulations. Explore feasibility of working with Human Resources on how to develop a more formalized mechanism to document supervisory feedback and professional growth goals of staff. Enhancing staff competencies in addressing the needs of business community will be a priority for training and examining staff responsibilities.

V. *Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs.*

- Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

VI. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Interpreters and translators are available to staff to communicate with diverse customer populations, for staff trainings, and supervision. ORS has two Video Relay stations to enable communication in ASL between staff who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, their colleagues, and customers. ORS utilizes a UBI Duo in order to provide another avenue for communication between staff who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, colleagues and customers.

The Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist, who manages the ORS and the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) web pages, has expertise in providing materials in alternate formats, and develops electronic tools for counselors. ORS assures that all information disseminated to staff with disabilities and customers is available in accessible format.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Region at ORS has developed and produced an ASL video that explains ORS services and is available on the ORS website.

Access to ORS information and services is provided through the use of the Language Line - The Big Word, interpreters from a variety of resources, and bilingual staff.

ORS brochures are reviewed and updated as needed when there is a change to a relevant policy, procedure, program, and or regulatory change.

VII. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

- As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

VIII. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

A Cooperative Agreement between RIDE and ORS has been the foundation of a collaborative relationship focused on school to work transition for over 16 years. This collaboration has enabled ORS to have an MA level Rehabilitation Counselor at each high school to provide an array of services formerly referred to as Transition to the new WIOA term of Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). The Cooperative Agreement describes interagency collaboration and coordination, the role and responsibilities of each partner, the process for resolving disagreements, as well as provides a Collaborative Services Chart (CSC). The CSC identifies the agency primarily responsible for services in each of the following categories: Assessment Services, Career Development Services, Community Living Services, Related Services, and Auxiliary Services.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) are ORS services that are provided, under the auspices of the Agreement between ORS and RIDE, to in-school youth with disabilities in collaboration with each Local Education Authority (LEA). These transition services fall under the regulations outlined in the 2014 Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) to help to prepare students for employment after high school. The Office of Rehabilitation Services strives to assist all students with significant disabilities to gain the necessary skills, preparation, exploration, and supports to enter the workforce. Incorporated into the ORS PETS Program is an expectation that all students who are found eligible for services will have an ORS approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) developed within 90 days of eligibility

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) focus on employment related information and services to in-school youth with significant disabilities what have an IEP or 504 plan. In addition, the state of Rhode Island is obligated to provide an array of transition services - based on a Department of Justice (DOJ) Consent Decree/Interim Settlement agreement - to in-school youth identified as having a significant intellectual disability (I/DD).

ORS has about 30 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who have Transition responsibilities for providing services to in-school youth with disabilities, technical assistance to school personnel, and outreach to families.

On a monthly basis, the Assistant Administrator for Transition facilitates a meeting with all the counselors with Transition responsibilities to reinforce Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS), training, and problem solving. At least annually, RIDE is invited to provide information about current and changing trends, regulations, and practices.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Pursuant to the Act, ORS offers to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) the opportunity to review and comment on the CSPD. Additionally, members of the State Plan, Quality Assurance Policy Committee met with ORS representatives to provide input into the CSPD.

- 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment.
 - Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - Individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - Individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
 - Individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
 - Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.
 - Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

RESULTS OF COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), complete a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) at three-year increments. The CNA is intended to identify the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those in need of Supported Employment, minorities with significant disabilities, underserved individuals, and individuals with disabilities served by other components of the workforce development network. In addition, the CNA is intended to identify the need to develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). ORS views the CNA as an evolving process that incorporates information from several diverse sources rather than from any one event or data source.

ORS and the State Rehabilitation Council will be initiating a CNA in FFY2016/17 for the 2018 State Plan. This assessment will incorporate the new WIOA regulations and focus on the rehabilitative needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR service needs of those:

- With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Who are minorities;
- Who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
- Who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and
- Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

During FFY2014, ORS addressed the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment using several resources including:

- Agency strategic planning
- Annual personnel needs assessments
- Community Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey
- Compliance with Rehabilitation Services Administrations' Standards & Performance Indicators
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Environmental Scan of data including: FFY2012 RSA Annual Agency Review, Internal MIS reports, American Community Survey, 2011 RI Employee Benefits Report, and November 2012 RI Employment Trends & Workforce Issues RI Department of Labor and Training Market Unit
- Implementation of the ORS 107 Monitoring Report
- Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disability Public Forums
- Office of Rehabilitation Services Staff Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey
- Focus group with key staff informants

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) seeks to involve agency staff in identifying the challenges and solutions needed to more effectively assist all individuals with significant disabilities to select, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. On December 20, 2013 Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff convened for a strategic planning day to reinforce the agency's strategic planning goals and development of annual work plans. Information for strategic planning was gathered through 2013/2014 CNA activities, meetings with the seven field services regions, annual agency work plans, and Quality Improvement Activities. ORS will continue to assess information as it becomes available and will continue to address the concerns raised in the RSA 107 Monitoring Report and Program Improvement Plan. Therefore, the strategic planning objectives have been modified in the following way:

- Coordinate joint training opportunities for CRP and ORS personnel
- Maximize ORS' collaboration with the netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers, Youth Centers, and business community
- Promote CRP capability in the provision of a continuum of employment services
- Encourage assessment activities and plan development that promotes informed choice, self-determination, and case movement toward employment
- Enhance Supported Employment services with emphasis in integrated and competitive goals
- Coordinate staff resources to work in collaboration with the SRC Outreach, QI/State Plan and Transition Subcommittees
- Emphasize outreach strategies that target underserved and unserved disability and minority populations, and address the needs of specific businesses
- Maintain a focus on quality employment outcomes (integrated, competitive employment at minimum wage or higher with benefits)

ANNUAL PERSONNEL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

The Training Coordinator of ORS conducted a Training Needs Assessment. Information elicited from staff is used to establish a list of training topics and concerns.

The VR Counselor CNA survey consisted of staff self-report identifying their top areas of training needs. Example of areas identified for training include: Supported Employment Training for VR Counselors and VR Vendors, Motivational Interviewing, Substance Abuse, Ethics and Vocational Rehabilitation, Autism/Asperger's Training, Worker's Compensation, Learning Disabilities and Transition, and Working with clients who have Criminal Backgrounds.

Training will also incorporate 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities as outlined by WIOA. A training schedule is developed based upon the identified needs and will be implemented throughout the year. This year, ORS anticipates an increase in the number of referrals of individuals with most significant disabilities who may require supported employment or extended evaluation services. Training in this area is planned for both staff, state partners, and for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP'S).

ORS has many new counselors (8 out of 44) who have been on the job 5 years or less. ORS will also be providing some specialized training to Management staff and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II's in the areas of clinical supervision and leadership skills. The agency continues to maintain a relationship with two colleges that offer MA programs in Rehabilitation Counseling. An adequate supply of qualified Rehabilitation Counselors, supervisory, administrative, fiscal, and support personnel are essential to provide quality rehabilitation services to customers of ORS.

COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The 2014 survey conducted by ORS and the RI State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was sent to 398 individuals, which included CRPs, educational providers, the Department of Labor and Training, and service providers of Intellectually Developmentally Disabled and Behavioral Health individuals. Recipients of the survey were also encouraged to forward the survey to other

interested parties; therefore the exact number who received the survey is unclear. Seventy-eight individuals completed the survey which represents a 20% return rate based on the 398. By comparison in 2011 the Community CRP CNA was sent to 67 recipients with a response of 34 surveys or 51%. While the response percentage is lower in 2014, by reaching more individuals' the agency saw a 44% increase over the 2011 number of responses thus providing the agency with more information on the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The survey conducted through Survey Monkey sought to identify the following:

- Quality of services received by people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment
- Availability of services throughout the state
- Obstacles customers confront in attempting to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment
- Individuals with disabilities who are underserved

Several significant findings were reflected by the results:

- Availability of jobs, individual's social skills, personal/home life barriers and fear of losing SSI and SSDI, medical benefits, and other subsidies, ranked as the top four issues preventing individuals from obtaining employment
- The top four issues preventing individuals from maintaining employment included personal home life barriers, social skills, availability of jobs and availability/cost of transportation
- Organizations felt unable to meet customers' needs for benefits counseling and off-site retention supports, including long term Supported Employment supports and job coaching. Work trials, internships and situational assessments were also noted, as was job preparation counseling, employment planning/assessments, interview preparation, and case management.

Respondents identified the following disabilities as least served by ORS:

- Substance abuse related disorders
- Intellectual Developmental Disability
- Behavioral Health

Respondents identified the following ethnic populations as least served by ORS:

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- Asian

CRPs indicated that ORS could:

- Enhance providers awareness of employer resources i.e. ADA, tax incentives, etc.

- Continue to enhance communication regarding ORS updates and changes to policies affecting services
- Continue to build and improve liaison relationships between counselors and CRPs
- Increase awareness of other provider resources, such as long term funding options
- Assist with recruitment of employers

COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

For FFY2015 ORS again met Standard 1 with positive outcomes for Performance Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.6 and met standard 2.1. As a result of not making Standard 1 and 2 for FFY2012, the Office of Rehabilitation Services as directed by Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act is currently on a Program Improvement Plan, though is hopeful with having met Standard 1 and 2 for the two required years that the PIP will be discontinued by RSA. With the goal of maintaining the highest quality of service to customers, the Strategic Planning Supervisor will continue to monitor the agency's compliance with all Standard and Indicators on a monthly basis with findings reported to the administration, QI Committee, supervisory personnel and staff.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

ORS maintained utilization of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys designed in 2009 with input from the SRC State Plan and Quality Improvement sub-committee. The survey, designed as an ongoing tool to be distributed at set intervals, provides longitudinal data on customer satisfaction. Surveys are sent to customers with successful case closures as well as to those whose cases closed unsuccessfully following receipt of services.

The following conclusions were formulated based on the results of the surveys.

Successful Closure Satisfaction Survey:

Since the 2011 CNA respondents to the survey indicated ORS has improved in preparing participants to obtain and maintain employment that matches their goals, interest and abilities. The 2015 satisfaction survey results reflect an increase from the 2014 responses, and continue to reflect improvement over the 2014 data in the areas of better preparing participants for employment and providing information to enable individuals to make informed decisions regarding benefits, Social Security and state specific benefits. Areas that continue to reflect need for monitoring are ensuring individuals are aware they can re-contact ORS for services after they are closed, continued learning and skill enhancement for advancement and quality of employment outcomes. Overall respondents continue to indicate that they would refer a friend for family member to ORS services.

Status 28 Customer Satisfaction Survey – Unsuccessful Closure after provision of services:

Results of the satisfaction survey since the 2011 CNA reflect the following areas for continued monitoring: ensuring customers are provided information on work incentives, Social Security and state specific benefits, educating customers on the assessment process and identifying the need for assistive technology. 2015 surveys reflected positive informed choice trends in the

areas of identification of interest, abilities and strengths as related to an employment goal and assistive technology assessments/needs. Areas for continued monitoring are guidance and counseling leading to enhanced understanding of the VR process and informed choice in the area of services. While respondents indicated a positive trend in receipt of benefits planning information it was noted that the number of respondents who discontinued engagement with VR due to a concern of losing of Social Security, medical coverage, etc. increased.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The environmental scan included information from a variety of sources such as: Agency MIS data, RSA data, RI Department of Labor & Training (DLT) and Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics, Disability Employment Statistics-U.S Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Community Survey US Census Bureau 2009-2011, 2011 RI Employee Benefits Report, and November 2012 RI Employment Trends & Workforce Issues RI Department of Labor and Training Market Unit. The sources indicated the following:

- The number of Rhode Islanders obtaining a high school degree/equivalency is below the national average and is the lowest in New England. This educational disparity will present a challenge in the coming years as it is projected that 41.7% of available jobs require a minimum of a High School/equivalency degree.
- While RI employment rate has improved since the 2011 CNA it remains one of the highest in the nation at 9% and the highest among the New England States.
- The 2011 Rhode Island Employee Benefits Report indicated that 73% of RI employers offered health insurance to full time employees and 13% offered health insurance to part time employees.
- The American Community Survey US Census Bureau 2009-2011 earnings estimate reflects that Rhode Islanders with a disability median income for a 12-month period in 2011 was \$21,932 overall, males earned \$26,464, and females earned \$18,890. Conversely, their non-disabled counterparts for the same period had a median income of \$31,957 overall, males \$38,024 and females \$27,098.
- Information from the November 2012 RI Employment Trends & Workforce Issues, RI Department of Labor and Training Market Unit indicates 44.3% of RI residents in 2010 were more likely to come from Latin America. 51.5% of European born RI residents are from Portugal and 80.7 % are from Western Africa. RI foreign-born residents (39.2% of the total population) are three times more likely to have not graduated high school than those born in the U.S. The 2010 Census and 2000 Census indicated that the largest population in RI is Caucasian, followed by Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and Asian. 6% identified themselves as some other race. RI counties with the highest Asian population are Providence 3.7%, Kent County 2.0% and Newport and Washington County at 1.6%. Hispanic populations centered in the counties of Providence 18.8%, Newport 4.2% and Kent 3.2%.
- Information obtained from Disability Employment Policy Resource by Topic in January 2013 16 to 19 year-olds with a disability were employed at a rate of 12.7% as opposed to 24.9% for non-disabled youth. For youth ages 20 to 24 with a disability, the employment rate was 25.7% versus 60.6% for non-disabled.

- Post 9/11 and Total Veteran's Unemployment Rates by State for 2011 show veterans in RI with an overall unemployment rate of 14.6% versus the US rate of 8.3%. The post 9/11 veteran unemployment rate is 16.8% for RI, and 12.1% for the US. RI is above its neighbors of Massachusetts and Connecticut who have over all % respectively of 9.5% and 9.4% and post 9/11 veteran unemployment rates of 7% and 8.7%
- Analysis of available RSA statistics for average hours worked per week highlights that in FFY 2011 the ORS average for non SE placements of 28.36 hours/week was below the national average of 32.23. The same held true for ORS average hourly earnings (\$11.15) compared to the national average of \$11.44. Supported Employment data showed ORS to be below the national average of 24.17 in work hours at 16.21/week, but above the national average in hourly wage with \$9.17 versus \$8.94. ORS was below the national average in work hours, but above the national pay per hour for Self-Employment. BEP work hours and pay were below the national average.
- RSA data on ORS employment outcomes by disability for FFY 2011 indicates that ORS is above the national average for visual impairments and mental & emotional disabilities and below the national average for physical impairments, communicative impairments, and cognitive impairments.
- Data available through RSA indicates for FFY 2011 ORS was above the national average in percentage of transition age youth (14 to 24) served in general/combined agencies with 38.7% versus the national average of 35.18%. For the same period ORSs' transition employment rate was 63.31% as opposed to the national average of 51.83%. Average work hours of 25.74% and average hourly pay of \$9.36 for the transition population in FFY 2011 was below the national average of 29.90 hours/week and \$9.56/hour. RSA data for individual age 65 and over reflects that RI is below the national average in employment rate, wage and hours.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORS 107 MONITORING REPORT

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted a review of ORS in March 2012. The RSA review processes included program performance evaluations, on-site and telephone discussions with stakeholders, and on-site visits with staff, and members of the SRC. RSA found several strengths in the program: strong leadership and dedicated staff; close collaboration with key partners; statewide presence at the netWORKri One-Stop Centers; and statewide cooperative partnerships with all school districts and transition services to youth. The most recent review included an assessment of transition services, organizational structure, and fiscal integrity of ORS. For FFY2015 ORS will focus on the following areas identified in the monitoring report as programmatic goals:

- Continue implementation of a comprehensive Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)
- Meet compliance standards for eligibility and IPE development
- Improve the quality of employment outcomes for transition-aged youth, Supported Employment, and adults
- Improve the rehabilitation rate for transitioning youth

RHODE ISLAND GOVERNORS COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES PUBLIC FORUMS TO IDENTIFY THE CONCERNS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Office of Rehabilitation Services participates annually in the Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disabilities (GCD) Public Forums. In 2015, staff from ORS participated in the seven forums held throughout the state. The forums allow individuals with disabilities, family members, advocates, and providers to present concerns about any of the services/resources for individuals with disabilities. The forums and subsequent public document by the GCD provides ORS with information on themes relevant to employment services for individuals with disabilities.

Employment related themes included:

- Concern over the continuum of services related to the Employment First Initiative
- Supported employment services, lack of long-term funding options and service need ratio to staffing
- Impact on individual benefits and services
- Continuity of services for transition-age youth as they move from one system to another

VR COUNSELOR COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In the summer of 2013 ORS and the RI State Rehabilitation Council developed and distributed a survey using Survey Monkey. The survey solicited staff perceptions on the needs of VR customers, barriers to services, and suggestions for improvement to VR services. Questions focused on the following areas: needs of the most significantly and significantly disabled, underserved and unserved populations, need for further development of CRPs, as well as use of the DLT netWORKri One-Stop system and youth centers to assist customers with disabilities to maintain and/or enter employment. The survey was sent to 79 individuals within the agency with 46 or 58% responses to the survey. In comparison the 2011 CNA was sent to 48 individuals within the agency with a response of 26 or 54.17%. As done with the Community CNA, ORS sought to include more agency input. Therefore, the 2014 staff CNA included VRC, VR Supervisors, fiscal, support staff, etc. which resulted in a 56.52% increase in the 2014 CNA response from 2011 CNA. Follow-up was completed with seven key informants who self-identified in their survey they would like to be contacted. In a focus group setting, 3 of the 7 met on 11/14/13 with the QI Committee to further share their feedback on the needs of individuals served by ORS.

Findings reflected the following themes:

Evaluation of ORS's improvement in areas noted in 2011

- CNA Services to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, individuals with Psychiatric and Emotional Disabilities and African-Americans ranked as the top three most improved areas since the 2011 CNA.

Respondents indicated the following as the least improved areas since the 2011 CNA

- Services for the South East Asian community, Native Americans, and Students with 504 plans ranked as the top opportunities to improve outcomes for underserved groups.

Respondents suggested the following to better encourage customer commitment to the rehabilitation process:

- Enhance guidance and counseling relationships
- Ensure vendors are accountable for the services they have been approved for through improved communication
- Renewed focus on provision of services/less involvement in activities not related to agency mission
- Focus on liaison relationships/community involvement

Needs of Individuals with Most Significant/Significant Disabilities:

- Continue to develop services and fee structures based on evidence of regional needs for specific populations throughout the state
- Increase the capacity and knowledge base of CRPs who provide Supported Employment services
- Improve access to vendors and interpreters who have technical competence, as well as awareness of cultural issues and distinctions
- Increase access to vendors with the ability to work with customers using non-English American Sign language
- Increase the capacity of CRPs who work with individuals with Developmental Disabilities to conduct vocational evaluations and situational assessments that focus on meaningful integrated and competitive employment
- Educate employers about the use of tax credits, hiring incentives, on-the-job training, internships, and other services that ORS provides.
- Establish a standard for CRP services to ensure consistent quality services through joint training with ORS staff and CRP vendors
- Develop service options that incorporate work place social skills and daily time management

Rehabilitation Needs of Minorities:

- Enhance the cultural competency of ORS staff and CRPs to specific minority populations within the state
- Continue to develop and enhance Supported Employment and Work-Trial opportunities
- Educate staff on availability of internal and external resources such as agency forms in different languages, the Big Word, bilingual co-workers, interpreting resources, and the Cultural Diversity Cadre
- Improve quality of Vocational Evaluation, Situational Assessment, and Job Preparation specific to minority needs with the CRP network
- Incorporate interpretation and communication needs into the IPE Underserved and Unserved Populations:

- Engage Southeast Asian, Muslim, Liberian, Cambodian, and African American communities through outreach and marketing strategies
- Educate ORS staff and vendors on existing wrap around services already available in the community to address mental health, medical needs, substance abuse, and legal barriers to employment
- Engage individual with physical disabilities, traumatic brain injury and individuals meeting Supported Employment eligibility
- Build capacity to support transition-age youth with physical, learning, and developmental disabilities, and those with a 504-education plan
- Improve outreach to Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visually Impaired communities, individuals within the Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) spectrum (specifically Asperger's Syndrome), and individuals with disabilities who are employed

Need to further develop established and/or establish new CRPs:

- Develop CRPs to address the needs within specific geographic areas, establish new CRPs, as needed, to address unmet needs, and adjust the CRPs network to address the changing needs of the customers and labor market
- Continue to improve quality, consistency, and accountability of services provided to customers in Vocational Evaluations, Situational Assessments, and Job Development
- Examine the Supported Employment process to ensure quality employment outcomes with increased hours, wages, and health benefits
- Utilize and maximize ORS collaboration with netWORKri One-Stop Centers
- Assess CRPs' ability to work with varying populations and disabilities

Meeting the needs of the Business Community:

- Educate ORS staff and CRPs to the needs of the Business Community
- Enhance presence at business expos and job fairs
- Provide Business Community with information on ADA and work place accommodations

4.11(b) Annual Estimates.

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - Each priority category, if under an order of selection.
 - The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and
 - Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES UNDER THIS STATE PLAN

For FFY2015, there were 2,460 new applicants, and 1843 individuals were deemed eligible. There were a total of 1,556 individuals who developed their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and 644 individuals who obtained successful employment outcomes. For FFY2016, ORS has a goal of 2,461 new applicants, and expects 1,844 individuals to become eligible. ORS anticipates that 1,557 new Individualized Plans for Employment will be developed and 646 successful outcomes achieved. For FFY2017, ORS projects 2,462 new applicants, with 1,845 individuals to become eligible for ORS services. ORS anticipates that 1,558 individuals will develop Individualized Plans for Employment, and projects 651 successful outcomes.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER TITLE I AND TITLE VI AND NUMBERS TO BE SERVED IN EACH ORDER OF SELECTION PRIORITY CATEGORY

In FFY2017, the projected number of clients to be served under an IPE is 5,060. One hundred percent (100%) of those expected to be served will be classified in the Order of Selection as either Category 1 - most significant, Category 2 - significantly disabled, or Category 4 – currently employed and at risk due to a disability of job loss. For FFY2017, ORS is expected to serve: Category 1 (most significant): 4,879 (Title I - 90%; Title VI - 10%); Category 2 (significant): 131 (Title I - 100%; Title VI - 0%)

THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION

In FFY2017 the projected number of clients who will be eligible for VR services but not receiving such services due to an order of selection is 60. ORS placed 53 individuals on the wait

list in FFY 2015. At the end of the first quarter of FFY2016 there is 45 individuals on the waitlist.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
OOS Category I - Title I	Title I	\$15,510,204	4,374	\$3,546
OOS Category I - Title VI	Title VI	\$1,790,730	505	\$3,546
OOS Category II - Title I	Title I	\$420,545	131	\$3,210
OOS Category IV – Title I	Title I	\$179,005	50	\$3,580
Totals		\$17,900,481	5060	\$3,538

4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities .The designated State unit must:

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
 - other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

STATE’S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services’ (ORS) goals and priorities, policies, and planning activities are jointly agreed upon by the state agency and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). These goals are generated from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), compliance with federal Standards and Performance Indicators as stated in WIOA, monitoring reviews, quality improvement findings, and feedback from customers, advocates, and other stakeholders. Inherent in these goals is the belief that ORS will assist individuals with significant disabilities to move toward achievement of vocational goals, career development, and increased self-sufficiency.

GOALS FOR FFY2017

GOAL #1: TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORS CUSTOMERS.

OBJECTIVE 1: Partner with two-three sector business to address personnel recruitment and training needs.

- Identify high turnover and/or specialized skill positions
- Establish training program specific to sector positions
- Enlist, via RFP, trainers to build and implement a training curriculum
- Pilot, modify and replicate

OBJECTIVE 2: Utilize participation on Governors Workforce Board, Workforce Investment Boards, and other advisory groups to gather current information about business sector needs and state responses

- Establish a system to disseminate information to VR Counselors
- Encourage RFP requirements of WIOA partners to devote 7% of grant to partnership with ORS and target individuals with disabilities
- Explore development of consistent processes and methodology of On-the-Job training (OJT)

OBJECTIVE 3: Develop, implement, and replicate the successful business partnerships already operating

- Expand Project Search from two to three sites
- Enlist Community Enterprise Training, a current ORS vendor, to develop an additional Business/ORS training–employer partnership.
- Partner with an emerging, high wage business sector

GOAL #2: TO PROVIDE A FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM THAT PREPARES CUSTOMERS FOR EMPLOYMENT.

OBJECTIVE #1: Establish an array of services that have the flexibility to meet the unique rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, engages unserved and underserved individuals, and moves customers into integrated competitive employment.

- In–School youth with disabilities: enhance the Transition program and service options within each high school to coordinate and deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) that provide assessment and work experiences to youth.
- Adults with disabilities: ensure a wide array of service providers and training programs enable customers to obtain meaningful, quality employment as rapidly as possible considering the occupational goal of the individual and the labor market.
- Design and modify programs and services as changing needs of customers are identified.

OBJECTIVE #2: Change the culture of Supported Employment (SE) vendors to expect that integrated competitive employment is the goal from services.

- Develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement process for vendors working with customers with Developmental Disabilities, as required by DOJ.
- Implement training opportunities for SE vendors in assessment, job development, and coaching.
- Conduct quarterly VR meetings with SE vendors to reinforce and strengthen Employment First principles and practice.
- Support and participate in the SE Developmental Disability and SE Behavioral Health vendor meetings.
- Examine the VR fee structure to ensure it rewards integrated employment outcomes.

OBJECTIVE #3: Ensure vendor competence for provision of vocational services and training program that result in integrated competitive employment outcomes.

- Replicate the Continuous Quality Improvement process for training and rehabilitation services vendors.
- Research and evaluate specific services and correlation with employment outcomes.
- Offer RFPs that are designed to provide innovative services, in collaboration with business and industry specific sectors, which result in increased employment outcomes.

GOAL #3: Develop data collection and reporting methods that meet the common WIOA performance measures and RSA standards of practice

Objective #1: Meet WIOA performance accountability measures

- Participate on the RI DOA common performance measures committee
- Determine the “what and how” of contributing ORS data to state reporting requirements
- Educate staff to the new data elements that are required and need to be maintained, timely, and accurate

Objective #2: Meet RSA requirements for eligibility and plan development

- Determine eligibility within 60 days of application
- Develop the Individualized Plan for Employment within 90 days of eligibility determination
- Utilize MIS to track adherence to these standards on a monthly basis

4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection.

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

Justification for order of selection

The current restriction on services to Category #1 Order of Selection is expected to continue from FFY2016 through FFY2017, thereby limiting the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) to provide services to eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities as designated under OOS Category 1. In order to meet the need for rehabilitation services and to

provide high-quality employment outcomes, ORS will continue to monitor the current priority classification within the Order of Selection, and adjust as necessary. All customers with Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are individuals with the most significant and significant disabilities. These individuals require multiple services over an extended time. In response to the WIOA waiver to the Order of Selection Wait List, ORS will be exercising its option to provide services to individuals, regardless of eligibility category, who are employed and need VR services to sustain employment. This category of eligibility will be reflected in a new status 4.

The Order of Selection consists of the following four categories:

Category 1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities

Category 2. Individuals with significant disabilities

Category 3. All other individuals with disabilities who cannot be classified in a higher category

Category 4. Individuals with a disability who are currently employed and at risk of job loss due to their disability and who could benefit from VR services to maintain employment

The Order of Selection does not discriminate against any person by type of disability, economic status, race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion, sex, or protected class.

Description of Priority categories

The Code of Federal Regulations CFR361.5 Applicable Definitions, (30) and (31) (i), (ii), (iii) defines an individual with the most significant disability in the following manner:

"An individual who has a severe physical or mental disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of employment outcome, and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time, and who have one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorder, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadriplegia, other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or from another disability or combination of disabilities, which based on an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, causes comparable substantial functional limitations."

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

ORS assures that its Order of Selection (OOS) policy gives first priority to individuals in Category 1 with the most significant disabilities. Services are delivered within a comprehensive, coordinated program that is designed to assist these individuals to prepare for and engage in gainful employment in an integrated setting.

ORS notifies all individuals that do not meet the current Order of Selection and provides them with information and referral services to assist them with preparation for obtaining employment and related services.

Individuals are reassessed when additional information relevant to OOS is received subsequent to a classification decision. Requests for post-employment services are not subject to Order of Selection.

Additionally, based on WIOA regulations, ORS will waive placement on the agency waitlist for individuals, eligible for ORS but in a wait list category of service, who are currently working and at risk of job loss due to their disability. Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) are ORS services that are provided to in-school youth with disabilities in collaboration with each Local Education Authority (LEA). These transition services fall under the regulations outlined in the 2014 Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) to help to prepare students for employment after high school. The Office of Rehabilitation Services strives to assist all students with significant disabilities who choose to work, to gain the necessary skills, preparation, exploration and supports to enter the workforce.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) cluster ORS transition services to meet our shared commitment to two populations of in-school youth with disabilities: (1) Students with significant disabilities that have an IEP or 504 plan; and (2) Students identified as having an **IDEA qualifying condition of I/DD** through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) census and are thus covered under the Department of Justice (DOJ) Consent Decree/Interim Settlement agreement.

ORS Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) include: Counseling and Guidance, Vocational Evaluations, Community-Based Work Experiences, Transition Academies, Summer Work, Various Community Employment Pilot Projects, and Work Components of the Transition Academies affiliated with the Regional Transition Centers. These PETS are explored based on the needs of the individual student.

The ORS/LEA team has an opportunity to work with the student and family to create the most appropriate Pre-Employment Transition Services based on the student's interests and aptitudes to assist them to transition from school into the workforce.

Service, outcome goals, and the time within which the goals will be achieved

Projections for numbers to be served in FFY2017 are based on recent performance: Order of Selection (OOS) Category 1 = 4,879; OOS Category 2 = 131; and OOS Category 4 = 50. The goal for all the customers referenced by the Order of Selection categories is an employment outcome. This employment outcome reflects the individual's informed career choice that has evolved from information about skills, interests, preferences, abilities and the labor market. The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is then developed to reflect that choice and the specific services/interventions needed by the individual to reach that employment outcome. It is anticipated that multiple services will be necessary over an extended period of time in order for the individual to reach their employment goal. Quantifying the length of time an individual is active with ORS is difficult as the necessary services, duration, and outcome is individualized to the needs of each customer.

Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after receiving services	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after receiving services	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
1	4,879	651	275	29	\$15,689,934
2	131	30	15	26	\$420,545
4	50	48	2	18	\$179,005

- 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

- (1) Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.
- (2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including :
 - (A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and
 - (B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

STATE’S GOALS AND PLANS FOR TITLE VI FUNDS

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services’ (ORS) goals and priorities, policies, and planning activities are jointly agreed upon by the state agency and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). These goals are generated from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), compliance with federal Standards and Performance Indicators, as stated in WIOA, monitoring reviews, the Department of Justice (DOJ) Consent Decree and Interim Settlement Agreement, quality improvement findings, and feedback from customers, advocates and other

stakeholders. Inherent in these goals is the belief that ORS will assist individuals with significant disabilities to move toward achievement of vocational goals, career development, and increased self-sufficiency.

GOALS FOR FFY 2017 TITLE VI

GOAL #1: TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORS CUSTOMERS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

OBJECTIVE #1: Partner with two to three sector business to address personnel recruitment and training needs.

- Identify high turnover and/or specialized skill positions
- Establish training program specific to sector positions
- Enlist, via RFP, trainers to build and implement a training curriculum
- Pilot, modify and replicate

OBJECTIVE #2: Utilize participation on Governors Workforce Board, Workforce Investment Boards, and other advisory groups to gather .current information about business sector needs and state responses

- Establish a system to disseminate information to VR Counselors
- Encourage RFP requirements of WIOA partners to devote 7% of grant to partnership with ORS and target individuals with disabilities
- Explore development of consistent processes and methodology of On-the-Job Training (OJT)

OBJECTIVE #3: Develop, implement, and replicate the successful business partnerships already operating

- Expand Project Search, targeting in-school youth with the most significant disabilities, from two to three sites
- Enlist Community Enterprise Training, a current ORS vendor, to develop an additional Business/ORS training–employer partnership.

GOAL #2: TO PROVIDE A FLEXIBLE SE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM, BASED ON EMPLOYMENT FIRST PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES THAT PREPARES CUSTOMERS FOR EMPLOYMENT.

OBJECTIVE #1: Establish an array of services that have the flexibility to meet the unique rehabilitation needs of adults and youth with the most significant disabilities to improve integrated competitive employment outcomes.

- In–School youth with disabilities: enhance the Transition program and service options within each high school to coordinate and deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) that provide assessment and work experiences to youth.

- Adults with disabilities: ensure a wide array of service providers and training programs enable customers to obtain meaningful, quality employment as rapidly as possible, considering the occupational goal of the individual and the labor market.
- Design and modify programs and services as changing needs of customers are identified.

OBJECTIVE #2: Change the culture of the Supported Employment (SE) vendor community to expect integrated competitive employment as the goal of services.

- Develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process for vendors working with customers with Developmental Disabilities, as required by DOJ.
- Expand the CQI process to all vendors authorized to provide the array of SE services.
- Implement training opportunities for SE vendors in assessment, job development/coaching, and business relationships.
- Conduct quarterly VR meetings with SE vendors to reinforce and strengthen Employment First principles and practice.
- Support and participate in the SE Developmental Disability and SE Behavioral Health vendor meetings.
- Examine the VR fee structure to ensure it rewards integrated employment outcomes.

Objective #3: Ensure vendor competence for provision of vocational services and training programs that result in integrated competitive employment outcomes.

- Research and evaluate specific services and correlation with employment outcomes.
- Offer RFPs that are designed to provide innovative SE services, in collaboration with business and industry specific sectors, which result in increased employment outcomes.

GOAL #3: Develop data collection and reporting methods that meet the common WIOA performance measures and RSA standards of practice

Objective #1: Meet WIOA performance accountability measures

- Participate on the RI DOA common performance measures committee
- Determine the “what and how” of contributing ORS data to state reporting requirements
- Educate staff to the new data elements that are required and need to be maintained, timely, and accurate

Objective #2: Meet RSA requirements for eligibility and plan development

- Determine eligibility within 60 days of application
- Develop the Individualized Plan for Employment within 90 days of eligibility determination
- Incorporate the time line, specific supports, and long term support providers in SE IPEs

- Enlist RIDE, BHDDH, Medicaid, & ORS to braid funding to support the provision of SE services as part of PETS.
- Establish increased knowledge about each state agency’s responsibility for funding, adults and youth, SE services in collaboration with each state partner and the SE vendor community.
- Utilize MIS to track adherence to these standards on a monthly basis

- **4.11(d) State’s Strategies.**

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcomes any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment Programs (Sections 101 (a) (15) (D) and (18) (b) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provision Act (GEPA):

1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.
3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR Program.
4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment and pre-employment transition services).
5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.
6. Strategies to improve performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under Section 116 of WIOA.
7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
8. How the agency’s strategies will be used to:
 - A. Achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
 - B. Support innovation and expansion activities;
 - C. Overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals

The goals and priorities established by ORS and the SRC as articulated in Attachment 4.11 (C) (1) State Goals and Priorities and in Attachment 4.11 (C) (4) State Goals and Plans for Title VI Funds will be realized through the following strategies:

I. METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:

ORS plans to expand and improve services through: (1) improved relationships with the business community, (2) staff training focused on client preparation for an employment outcome, (3) increased marketing and accessibility of information about the agency; (4) analysis of internal processes and methods to improve operational systems and overall services to clients; and (5) Continuous Quality Improvement Activities.

1. The overall purpose of ORS, as reinforced by WIOA and the RI Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) system change initiatives, is to increase the competitive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through partnerships with and responsiveness to the needs of the business community. Efforts over the next year will include collaboration with other state agencies to develop a coordinated approach to implementing a business needs and customer driven service delivery system, as described in the GWB's Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP). This revised service delivery system is to be based on the identified personnel needs of the business community and the identified training and job preparation needs of the ORS customer. ORS will enlist its partners to identify two-three businesses to develop targeted training programs to meet the specific needs of business sectors. ORS will continue to participate on the Governors Workforce Board, Work Force Investment Boards, Common Performance Measures Task Group and other advisory groups to gather current information about business sector needs and state responses. In addition, ORS will advocate for the Vocational Rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities as the state re-aligns its workforce development resources. ORS will encourage WIOA partners to include an RFP requirement that 7% of grants must be devoted to partnership with ORS and target individuals with disabilities. Several successful business partnerships, Project Search and Community Enterprise Training, will continue to be supported. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), required of the SRC and ORS at three year increments, will incorporate the findings of the CSIP and determine if any additional assessment areas are appropriate.
2. ORS staff training focused on workforce development principles will enable Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to use their knowledge and training about disabilities, functional limitations, and competitive employment to develop plans with clients that include not only acquisition of technical knowledge through training but also development of the work behaviors critical to employment success. Increased use of vocational guidance and counseling, provided by ORS staff, will be essential to help clients prepare for the demands of employment. In addition, incorporating work experiences into employment plan development will increase the client's ability to make informed choices about career selection and provide the ORS Counselor a feedback opportunity about work behaviors. Participation in employment experiences for individuals needing Supported Employment, in-school youth and clients attending college/training programs, funded by ORS, will be encouraged and included in Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE). ORS will also ensure that services are

focused on access to opportunities for real work experiences and integrated competitive employment outcomes at or above minimum wage. ORS will encourage and reinforce, with ORS approved Supported Employment providers and other state entities, Employment First and Recovery principles and practices into service delivery in order to increase expectations that individuals with significant intellectual and psychiatric disabilities can obtain quality employment outcomes in integrated settings at competitive wages. ORS will provide access to information about SSA Work Incentives, Ticket to Work, and other State-specific benefits to customers and their families, CRPs, support staff, and ORS staff in order to support informed choice and support employment.

3. ORS will be updating its web-page to ensure that information about the agency is current and relevant to the WIOA and state priorities around workforce development. Links to partners and examples of partnerships will be helpful to market the services of ORS to potential clients, businesses and other agencies. ORS will explore the feasibility of being able to communicate and advertise using this vehicle of communication. In addition, orientation groups, literature distribution about the agency, presence at the netWORKri One-Stop Centers, and participation in resource education events around the state will enhance referrals and visibility.
4. Expansion and improvement of services involves also examining processes that guide the internal operation of the agency. ORS is critically examining its services through participation in a state-wide LEAN initiative spearheaded by the Governor of Rhode Island. This effort provides an opportunity to explore the specific processes and methods that structure the operation of the agency. An initial study of agency operations will focus on the intake process in order to develop the most efficient/effective customer friendly process possible. A second area of study will be the billing process that has a direct impact on timeliness of payment to vendors.
5. The ORS Continuous Quality Improvement committee will update the CQI plan annually to ensure a continuous QI system for monitoring, evaluating, and providing timely information for staff and administration about the agency's progress in meeting the goals outlined in the State plan. Monitoring via monthly reports to ORS Administration and staff of the ORS performance on Standards and Indicators will occur. Standard #1, VRs Impact on Employment; Standard #2.1, Equal Access Opportunity for Individuals and the WIOA performance indicators will be the focus of these reports. Additionally, quarterly reporting to the Governor's office on the status of the deliverables (eligibility, IPE development and IDD Supported Employment services) that are included in the RI Strategic Plan Vocational Rehabilitation objectives. ORS will continue to elicit feedback from customers through satisfaction surveys, waitlist outreach and follow-up as well as ongoing case reviews. The DOJ settlement requires a CQI process and review be implemented to ensure quality services are provided to Supported Employment clients. ORS will continue to refine, pilot and modify the process for CQI review of CRPs.

II. PROVISION OF A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS.

ORS is able to meet the assistive technology and accommodation needs of its clients through the Assistive Technology grant and through vendors approved to provide services through the fee-for-service authorization process.

ORS is the lead agency for the Assistive Technology Grant in RI. The RI Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) is the name of the program, operated by ORS, that facilitates the deliverables of the grant. Through contracts with several community based non-profits, ORS ensures that assistive technology demonstrations, device loans and re-use opportunities are available. On an annual basis, ORS enlists the ATAP partners to conduct a training for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors of ORS.

ORS staff are expected to incorporate access to and acquisition of assistive technology, evaluations, assessment, and training as core services for adults and youth with disabilities. The Deaf & Hard of Hearing and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) units are especially knowledgeable about assistive technology and include these resources in all aspects of the vocational rehabilitation process. In addition, ORS has several vendors who can access worksite accommodations and assistive technology needs on a case by case basis.

The agency Workforce Development Supervisor is also a resource to employers around accommodations.

ORS plans to enhance the use of the ATAP device demonstration and loan capacity as a resource for making informed choices about equipment, and for using try-outs prior to purchase in order to make more appropriate purchasing decisions. In addition, the DOJ settlement has resulted in an increased use of ATAP for ORS supported employment clients ability to loan equipment and devices.

III. OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM.

ORS monitors outcome ratios for minority populations in order to identify the current level of service, the need for expanded or new CRP services, and potential emerging minority populations.

Review and analyze needs of minority and underserved populations, in order to develop capacity and expand CRP network ability to competently provide services that result in increased quality employment outcomes.

ORS ensures all agency materials, including those found on the ORS website and available for informational sessions, are provided in Spanish (or other languages), or alternate formats, as needed.

Establish new and innovative strategies to maintain ORS involvement with in-school youth

with disabilities and youth adults who are no longer in school.

Provide in-service training on cultural sensitivity and competence, including instruction on use of interpreters; etc.

Formulate strategies to maintain communication and services with minority and underserved populations from application through service delivery to a quality employment outcome.

IV. METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS TO POST-SECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES).

A Cooperative Agreement (CA) between RIDE and ORS, an RSA Best Practice, has been the foundation of a collaborative relationship focused on school to work transition for over 16 years. Attachment 4.8 (B) (5) explains this relationship and the content of the CA so will not be repeated.

ORS plans to build upon its robust Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) program to in-school youth with disabilities in collaboration with each Local Education Authority (LEA). Incorporated into the ORS PETS Program is an expectation that all students who are found eligible for services will have an ORS approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) developed within 90 days of eligibility. PETS focuses on employment related information and services to in-school youth with significant disabilities that have an IEP or 504 plan. In addition, the state of Rhode Island is obligated to provide an array of transition services - based on a Department of Justice (DOJ) Consent Decree/ Interim Settlement agreement - to in-school youth identified as having a significant intellectual disability (I/DD).

Each high school has an identified ORS Rehabilitation Counselor as a liaison available to consult, provide technical assistance, review student progress, attend IEP meetings, and accept referrals. In addition, the DOJ requires each high school to develop career development plans on all in-school youth with I/DD beginning at age fourteen and reviewed annually. ORS contributes to this process through Rehabilitation Counselor attendance and/or consultation to the transition team meetings. A referral system is in place for students with disabilities and each fall ORS, in collaboration with the Regional Educational Collaboratives, provides an orientation to Special Education staff at each Rhode Island High School. PETS services include: Counseling & Guidance, Vocational Evaluations and Assessments, Community Based Work Experiences, Transition Academy participation, Summer Work, ORS/LEA Community Employment Projects. These PETS are provided based on the individualized needs of each student as identified by the team, family, and student. Any work activities already completed by the LEA such as volunteer positions, work tryouts, and internships provide valuable information to the discussion and planning process. These activities are considered trial work experiences so are important to vocational planning.

PETS incorporates services for the DOJ identified youth with significant intellectual disabilities as well as for all in-school youth eligible for ORS. The team, including the student and family,

determine the additional school/home/community experience needed to augment the employment exploration services already provided by the LEA. These ORS opportunities for in-school youth may include such services as: Vocational Evaluations and Assessments; Community Based Work Experiences; Participation in Transition Academies; Summer Work Experiences for In-School youth (Employment Alliance – an extended school year paid work experience supported by ORS & an LEA as well as the four-week paid work experience funded by ORS to an ORS approved provider); Project Search, and a pilot of a summer internship program specifically designed for young adults in 2 year and 4 year degree programs

V. PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The new CRP Supervisor, formerly a Field Supervisor with the agency, has been in place for the past year. Through his efforts, ORS is establishing quarterly meetings with the Supported Employment, General, and Transition vendors to address concerns specific to their services and to reinforce their role within the Workforce Development community of RI. These meetings also provide an opportunity to clarify agency expectations, new service delivery ideas, and funding issues. Also, meetings are being scheduled with specific high volume vendors and staff to address agency specific issues as they arise and to cultivate increased communication and partnership. Through his participation, on the ORS Continuous Quality Improvement Team, the agency has been developing a Quality Assurance program initially for Supported Employment providers. This Quality Assurance Program is required by the DOJ Consent Decree but will eventually be generalized to all CRP providers.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee will work with the CRP Supervisor to develop increased options for individuals with disabilities who are considered underserved and/or minority populations based on the CNA findings. In addition, ongoing Quality Improvement activities such as the quarterly satisfaction survey are developed and implemented by the SRC State Plan and Continuous Quality Improvement Committee. These studies, organized by the ORS Strategic Planning Supervisor, provides ongoing information that is relevant to customers' vocational rehabilitation needs and planning.

In 2013, ORS designed a fee-for-service model that provided financial incentives for employment outcomes that meet certain benchmark criteria: (1) hours worked and access to and participation in benefits. ORS reviewed the Quality Incentive Bonus being offered to Community Rehabilitation Program providers for the past two years. This resulted in a suspension and plan to redesign the incentive with a focus on assisting customer with obtaining employment that is in keeping with their vocational goal and offers higher hourly wages and the provision of retention services for a longer period of time to assist customers with position advancement and income.

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) will continue to develop fee-for-service agreements with a wide network of private vocational rehabilitation providers in order to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. An identified need, as determined by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), labor market information, or by the individualized needs of customers, will initiate efforts to create a new service or training option. However, training programs must demonstrate that employment in the

field is identified by business sectors. Fee-for-service agreements incorporate a similar process with the Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) being funded based upon authorization, service provision, and employment outcomes. ORS will utilize the information from the FFY2013 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) as a foundation for expansion and/or development of new fee-for-service agreements that meet the employment needs of customers. In FFY 2016/2017, a new Comprehensive Needs Assessment will be completed that captures WIOA expectations of employer needs.

VI. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

ORS is participating on a state performance measure committee that is part of the Governor's system change efforts. The committee is examining methods to gather and track employment outcomes, educational, and skill advancement as well as expenditures. ORS is working with the MIS system to be able to capture all required WIOA data elements and employment information to be reported quarterly on open and closed cases. In addition, monthly monitoring of time line requirements to determine eligibility and IPE development are in place. Each staff member has annual performance targets for the number of new applicants, plan development, and successful employment outcomes. This year will provide an opportunity to gather baseline performance information that will provide the basis for improvement strategies moving forward.

VII. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

ORS is in a unique position to assist other components of the Workforce Development system to provide services to individuals with disabilities. The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor interacts with the business community, federal employment resources, National Employment Team (NET), Chamber of Commerce, Women's Business Enterprise, and Minority Business Enterprise trade organizations. Both the Workforce Development Supervisor and the Administrator of VR participate on each of the two existing Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) covering Providence/Cranston and Greater RI areas and their Youth Sub-committee. ORS staff review RFPs of Rhode Island's two Workforce Investment Boards, Youth Councils, and Youth Centers; and advocate strategies for the inclusion of youth with disabilities in the Governor's Workforce Investment initiatives.

ORS, through its parent agency, Rhode Island Department of Human Services and as required by WIOA, is a financial and programmatic partner with Rhode Island netWORKri One-Stop Centers. ORS counselors have designated days and times at each of the One-Stop Centers in order to provide access to ORS services including applications, counseling, information and referral, and placement services. ORS personnel attend monthly statewide Employer Services Network meetings at the Providence/Cranston One-Stop Career Center/netWORKri. In addition, ORS personnel, through the Assistive Technology grant (ATAP), provide consultation and training to the One-Stop staff on disability issues, accessibility considerations, and assistive technology. ORS has two Memorandums of Understanding with the RI Workforce Investment Board that defines the relationship between ORS and the One Stop Centers. In addition, ORS personnel are members of each of the two regional workforce investment boards (WIB):

Providence Cranston Workforce Solutions and Greater Rhode Island Workforce Partnerships. Each WIB has a Youth Board that ORS personnel attend and participate in annual Request for Proposal reviews.

ORS provides leadership and consultation to the vendor community. Vendors have historically viewed themselves as “social service” oriented rather than as part of the workforce development community. Providing case specific consultation as well as education about business practices, employment outcomes and accountability has become a focus of the dialogue between ORS and its approved vendors.

VIII. THE AGENCY’S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

1. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The goal and objectives outlined by ORS in attachment 4.11(c)(1) to increase competitive employment opportunities for ORS customers and to provide a flexible service delivery system that prepares customers for employment align with the 2013/2014 Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). Information for strategic planning was gathered through 2013/2014 CNA activities, meetings with the seven field services regions, and Quality Improvement Activities. ORS will continue to assess information as it becomes available and to address the concerns raised in the RSA 107 Monitoring Report and Program Improvement Plan. ORS will coordinate joint training opportunities for CRPs and ORS personnel, maximize ORS’ collaboration with the netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers, Youth Centers, and business community, and promote CRP capability in the provision of a continuum of employment services. ORS will encourage assessment activities and plan development that promotes informed choice, self-determination, and case movement toward integrated competitive employment, enhance Supported Employment services with emphasis in integrated and competitive goals, maintain a focus on quality employment outcomes (integrated, competitive employment at minimum wage or higher with benefits), emphasize outreach strategies that target underserved and unserved disability and minority populations, and address the needs of specific businesses and coordinate staff resources to work in collaboration with the SRC sub-committees as warranted example, QI/State Plan. ORS and SRC will be initiating a new CNA during FFY2017 for incorporation into the 2018 State plan.

2. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES:

ORS will utilize Innovation and Expansion (I & E) funds during FFY 2017 to support the activities of the SRC. The SRC and ORS will conduct a state-wide comprehensive needs assessment, as required by RSA. The results of this CNA will establish the Goals and Priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment services under WIOA. This CNA will incorporate existing reports from the Governor’s Workforce Board, the results of the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities as well as DLT reports to frame and structure the CNA.

ORS will utilize I&E funds to develop innovative training and placement services that are responsive to the needs and preferences of the business community and ORS clients. Such efforts as Project Search, business based training and expansion of OJT will be explored. Partnerships, with DLT and other state agencies, to develop a coordinated response that maximizes funding will be encouraged.

I&E funds will be used to generate a service delivery response that increases the number of minority and underserved populations who participate in services, stay engaged, and who obtain quality employment outcomes.

ORS will use I&E funds to cultivate new CRPs and innovative service-delivery models to meet the diverse rehabilitation, support, training, and employment needs of underserved populations: minority populations, individuals with significant intellectual disabilities, TANF populations, individuals with Asperger's and Autism, and individuals with sensory impairments

ORS will use I&E funds to explore development of a performance based contract specific to the services provided by the SE Vendor community to individuals with significant intellectual disabilities. The purpose of this pilot is to increase the employment outcomes, as per the DOJ settlement, for this population of ORS clients.

3. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

ORS will increase the number of minority and underserved populations who participate in services and who obtain integrated competitive employment outcomes by cultivating CRPs to meet the needs identified in the CNA.

ORS will review and utilize the GWB Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP) to assess service delivery within the State and development of employment services for ORS customers.

ORS will enlist the resources of interpreters, ensure forms and information is accessible. Orientation groups are provided for potential applications to attend and apply for services, this includes an orientation group monthly with Hispanic bilingual staff.

ORS maintains the ability to access information and the application for services on our website.

VRC are assigned to schools and other community agencies as liaisons to facilitate access to ORS services.

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. Describe:

- **An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:**

(A) Identify the strategies that contribute to the achievement of the goals

(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities

- **An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment Program Goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent year were achieved:**
 - a. **Identify the strategies that contribute to the achievement of the goals**
 - b. **Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities**
- **The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA**
- **How the funds for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.**

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services' (ORS) goals and priorities, policies, and planning activities were jointly agreed upon by the state agency and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). These goals for FFY2015 were generated from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), compliance with federal Standards and Performance Indicators, monitoring reviews, quality improvement findings, and feedback from customers, advocates and other stakeholders. Inherent in these goals was a belief that ORS will assist individuals with significant disabilities to move toward achievement of vocational goals, career development, and increased self-sufficiency. Several new initiatives, fee structure adjustments, and expanded training programs have been developed in response to our data analysis; CNA; and feedback from our customers, vendors, and staff.

I. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED.

- **ACTUAL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES IN COMPETITIVE SETTINGS:**

FFY2014 - Successful Closures # 608; Successful Transition Closures #186;
Successful Minority/Underserved # 165

FFY2015- Successful Closures # 643; Successful Transition Closures #175;
Successful Minority/Underserved # 219

Variance - Successful Closures #35; Successful Transition Closures #-11; Successful Minority/Underserved # 54

II. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED

EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT YEAR WERE ACHIEVED:

• **ACTUAL SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES IN COMPETITIVE SETTINGS:**

FFY2014

Successful Supported Employment Closures # 60

Successful Minority and Underserved Closures # 18

FFY2015

Successful Supported Employment Closures # 95

Successful Minority and Underserved Closures # 36

Variance

Successful Supported Employment Closures # 35

Successful Minority and Underserved Closures # 18

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

In FFY2015, ORS sought to educate staff, CRPs, and vendors to the expectations and deliverables inherent in WIOA. The renewed emphasis on collaboration with the business community, between and among workforce development providers and new performance standards had a positive impact on the focus of the agency. Some examples of that impact:

1. BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

ORS partnered with a CRP to identify the specific training needs of a large and growing business. The training that resulted from this collaboration occurred within the actual business facility and prepares job candidates for the exact skill set required by the employer, and thus a successful job match. The partnership not only offers more community integrated competitive employment opportunities for ORS customers, but it is also producing a qualified and specifically trained pool of candidates for a local business. The third round of training will be starting January 2016 and customers from the first group are still in milestone #three of four milestones and second group are in milestone #2. The ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's efforts at availability, presence, and problem identification and solving has been invaluable to the success of this project.

ORS has developed and actively utilized paid work experiences for assessments, career exploration, job try-outs, and potential reference for clients. ORS partners with CRPs to provide a service to the

businesses called Community Based Work Experiences. The CRP covers the workers compensation insurance, the customer's minimum wage salary per hour of work, and is available for any issues that may arise on the job. This service provides an opportunity for the business to try out potential workers with minimal risk and provides the client with a hands on opportunity to try a job for fit and interest.

Employer Based Skill Evaluation (EBSE), a partnership between ORS and specific businesses, provide up to three months' salary subsidized work experience in a particular career interest area of the client. The EBSE has been vetted through the Department of Human Services' Legal Department and has stringent procedures in place to minimize the risk associated with other work experience models. More than five businesses actively participated in this new initiative, which resulted in 3 individuals being hired at 3 different businesses.

Over the past year, ORS has actively pursued enhancing the relationship with the business community through participation in the RI Business Leadership Network (RIBLN) which provided a myriad of educational workshops to employers: disability resources, Job Accommodation Network (JAN), and ORS services. ORS has representation on each of the two Rhode Island Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), as well as the Governors' Workforce Board, the two Youth Councils of each WIB, as well as MOU's with each of these WIBs. In addition, each WIB has a Disability Sector under the new WIOA regulations, in mutual agreement, this sector from each WIB will now be one. In addition, the Agency Workforce Development Supervisor is the point of contact for not only federal jobs posted through the National Employment Team (NET), but also for those businesses that have a multi-state presence. However, the majority of the positions are not in Rhode Island, and most ORS customers are reluctant to relocate.

The Agency Workforce Development Supervisor has educated staff regarding the changing needs of the business community, identified resources to assist customers with criminal backgrounds, and oriented customers to the on-line application process for most jobs. The Workforce Development Supervisor and two staff have facilitated 5 interview workshops with 37 participants of which 22% of participants achieved successful employment outcomes following their attendance. These workshops help the job seeker become more knowledgeable about and more skillful in the interviewing process. In addition, the Workforce Development Supervisor provides support and critiques of resumes for customers. The Workforce Development Supervisor has also met with numerous students at the Transition Academy to prepare these students for the world of work. Job leads were also sent to the classroom facilitator.

As a component of the PETS program, ORS, in collaboration with other partners, has instituted several Project Search programs within the health care industry sector. The state emphasis and commitment to Employment First principles for individuals with significant intellectual disabilities has helped to facilitate RI Project Search becoming a reality. The first Miriam Hospital Project Search – 2014 was so successful, that the program was replicated with Blue Cross in 2015 and is planning to further expand to an additional site in 2016.

The Workforce Development Supervisor (WDS) has developed more than 30 business partners with a myriad of companies in Rhode Island. When provided with job openings from these partners, she immediately sends out this job to the 42 counselors who then send it on to their

appropriate job seekers. Once a qualified job seeker has applied and after a confidential release has been obtained, the WDS contacts the employer and job developers on the qualified job seeker's behalf. In several cases, the job applicant had previously attended one of the interviewing workshops which provides a better awareness of the job seeker's skills and abilities to perform the job he/she is applying to.

2. COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROVIDERS:

ORS reviewed the Quality Incentive Bonus being offered to Community Rehabilitation Program providers for the past two years. This resulted in a suspension and plan to redesign the incentive with a focus on assisting customer with obtaining employment that offers higher hourly wages and the provision of retention services for a longer period of time to assist customers with position advancement and income.

Over the past few years, ORS has had several personnel changes and coverage gaps of the Community Rehabilitation Supervisor position due to retirements and ailments. As a result, the communication with the ORS vendor community and ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors has not been as consistent and clear as ideal given the complexities of the fee-for-service relationship. The new CRP Supervisor, formerly a Field Supervisor with the agency, has been in place for the past year. Through his efforts, ORS is establishing quarterly meetings with the Supported Employment, General, and Transition vendors to address concerns specific to their services and to reinforce their role within the Workforce Development community of RI. These meetings also provide an opportunity to clarify agency expectations, new service delivery ideas, and funding issues. Also, meetings are being scheduled with specific high volume vendors and staff to address agency specific issues as they arise and to cultivate increased communication and partnership. Through his participation, over the past year, on the ORS Continuous Quality Improvement Team, the agency is developing quality assurance mechanisms initially for Supported Employment providers, as required by the DOJ Consent Decree, which will be generalized to all CRP providers.

ORS is assisting five educational collaboratives in transitioning from being a contract-based service provider of 220 vocational evaluations per year to multi-service fee-for-service partners. Meetings with the staff and leadership of each collaborative and ORS have continued as the collaboratives transition from a funding contractor to becoming a provider which develops a business model and the technical expertise to become a comprehensive CRP using a fee-for-service model of reimbursement. Training in job development and technical assistance about the array of services necessary to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation program have been offered to the five collaboratives.

3. ORS PERSONNEL:

A critical component of customer education and career counseling is staff training and clinical supervision. ORS counselors have participated in a number of in-person trainings and on-line trainings designed to reinforce the fundamental principles of the ORS mission, vocational rehabilitation practices, customer service, and quality employment outcomes. These trainings have included areas, such as: supported employment, documentation, eligibility determination,

plan development, ADA accommodations, transferable skills analysis, assistive technology, and job development and job placement activities. These topics provided a basic skill set for the newer counselors and a refresher for the more experienced counselors. This information has directly impacted their vocational activities with the customers as they implemented the new skills that they have learned.

Counselors have been encouraged to incorporate labor market research, volunteer work, situational assessments, and informational interviews, as well as Ticket to Work and other Social Security Work Incentives, into vocational exploration with the customer in order to support informed choice and career development. With this knowledge, the customer could then choose an appropriate vocational goal based on informed choice, which will help improve the overall quality of their employment outcomes and job retention.

ORS revised its Supported Employment Program to reinforce Employment First principles, to provide an array of new services, more specific outcome-based services, and a focus on quality employment outcome in integrated employment settings. ORS has utilized Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a liaison role for each of the Supported Employment CRP's providing services to ORS customers. ORS has created and hired an Assistant Administrator for Supported Employment and four additional Master's level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who have been assigned specifically to Supported Employment cases loads. The Assistant Administrator and the CRP Supervisor are meeting with the SE providers and are training the CRP's on the Supported Employment referral, reporting and billing process. The liaisons will be the main point of contact for the CRP's and will assist with monitoring outcomes, service delivery and maintain communication with CRP's for continued program improvement.

4. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

ADULT SERVICES

ORS provided Benefits Counseling to ORS clients through a fee-for-service arrangement and through WIPA by using several SSA Certified Benefits Counselors. In addition, a small budget was reserved to conduct sessions about work incentives to non-ORS customers. ORS, in 2015, elected to discontinue its administration of WIPA and did not respond to the RFP submitted by SSA. The staff time involved in oversight and reporting for this SSA grant program suggested another entity might be indicated. ORS supported the Sherlock Center in its application for WIPA.

ORS is the primary provider of employment services for RIWORKS (TANF) parents with disabilities. The referral process consists of both an ORS and a TANF/DHS supervisors/staff jointly presenting our programs to RI Works parents. Over the past year, DHS has invited 723 referrals to 73 joint Orientation Meetings of which 420 attended. Of the attendees, 122 applied for services with ORS. RIWorks parents continue to be an underserved population that presents unique obstacles to engagement. A 4-week work readiness program has been quite effective in providing a structure and support to RI Works parents who are moving toward employment.

VR provides several options for Work Readiness/Job Preparation depending on the individualized needs of the client. Through the general and supported employment components

of VR, a 4 week job preparation program is tailored for customers to learn about the demands of employment, interviewing and job retention. In addition, the VR Work Force Development Supervisor conducts interviewing workshops for clients. In FY2014, 37 participants attended of which 8 or 22% obtained employment. VR funds clients to attend training programs and educational institutions based on the employment goal of the client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

The state of RI recently negotiated a Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure that Employment First Principles and practices are utilized in planning and service delivery to adults, in-school youth and out-school youth with significant intellectual disabilities (I/DD) who need access to the continuum of Supported Employment Services in order to work. The DOJ court order requires three state agencies: (1) Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), (2) the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), and (3) the Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to develop and implement a service delivery system that ensures individuals, adults and youth, with I/DD have access to integrated competitive employment opportunities in order to make fully informed choices about work. The three state agencies are developing Cooperative Agreements, Data Exchange Agreements, and joint Continuous Quality Improvement efforts as elements/requirements of the CD and ISA.

ORS developed a pilot program for youth being released from the Training School. The program offers 20 weeks of occupational training and includes 15 weeks of classroom training and a 5-week paid employer based internship in the industry they are being trained.

5. PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PETS) :

ORS has had a Cooperative Agreement (CA) with RIDE for over 16 years. This agreement is the foundation for ORS to have an MA Rehabilitation Counselor at each high school in the state. The ORS Rehabilitation Counselor functions as a liaison, consultant, and referral source to the transition personnel of each high school in the state. ORS has been providing a wide array of transition services since the inception of the Cooperative Agreement. This CA creates the foundation for the ORS transition program to provide PETS services at each of the high schools in RI. The array of services for in-school youth with disabilities include: Vocational Evaluations and Assessments, Community Based Work Experiences, support for participation in Transition Academies and ORS/LEA Summer Employment experiences; Summer Work, Project Search, and other work activities.

The new WIOA PETS requirements are addressed through several additional initiatives in response to the unique needs of youth with disabilities:

- 1. Miriam Hospital Project Search:** ORS has led the steering committee and obtained and funded the license to bring Project Search to Rhode Island. We have partnered with the Providence School Department and the Miriam Hospital to run a successful site this year. We are providing services to **8 students** in the protected class. Two students have been hired by the Miriam Hospital. The others are participating in job development.

2. **Blue Cross Project Search:** ORS led the expansion to open our second Project Search site in September 2015. This is a collaboration with the Cranston School Department. ORS applied for the license and arranged technical assistance. ORS is currently working with several medical companies and school systems with the hope of opening two new sites in 2016.
3. **Summer Employment Alliance/Cumberland:** ORS developed a Service Agreement with Cumberland High School and Northern Collaborative to offer a paid integrated summer work experience for students with I/DD as part of the extended school year program. Cumberland staff provided job coaching. ORS provided funding to the Northern Collaborative for wages and technical assistance. The Northern Collaborative provided the technical assistance to insure integrated community job placements based on the interests/aptitudes of each participant. Students work for 4 weeks at summer positions. The Project is expected to serve **8 students**
4. **Pilgrim Employment Pilot:** ORS has partnered with Pilgrim High School and West Bay Collaborative in order to provide 100 hour individualized paid internships in the community along with weekly job readiness training for **10 students** with disabilities in their junior or senior year of high school.
5. **Central Falls Tri-employment Program:** ORS has partnered with Central Falls High School and Goodwill Industries to provide 100 hours of individualized paid internships in the community along with weekly work readiness training for **10 students** with disabilities in their junior or senior year of high school.
6. **NorthWest Pilot:** ORS partnered with Northern Rhode Island Collaborative to provide comprehensive employment services to fifteen students in this rural community. The pilot enables services to be provided in the students' home community. Services include vocational evaluations, community based work experiences, summer work, job development and placement.
7. **Planning for the Future:** DLT/ORS Pilot is a joint project to collaboratively utilize each agencies funding to provide two years of services to 6 students at North Kingstown High school. ORS funded the first year of summer work. DLT provided job readiness and summer work for the second year of services. ORS and DLT are is exploring expansion of the project to South Kingstown and Northern RI.

ORS has been funding and coordinating summer work program for in-school and out-of-school youth in the community since 2010. Last year ORS funded summer work experiences to 335 students with a range of disabilities.

Eleven ORS approved agencies assisted in developing independent community employment sites where participants received stipends for their work.

IV. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND DATA COLLECTION:

The Strategic Planning Supervisor, Assistant Administrator for Operations, two Vocational Rehabilitation Field Supervisors, Community Rehabilitation Program Supervisor, Sr. Human Services Policy & System Specialist, and Sr. Word Processing Typist, developed, administered,

and monitored a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQI) in collaboration with the Quality Assurance/State Plan/Policy sub-committee of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The CQI Plan evaluates and monitors agency concerns in collaboration with the SRC. The focus of the CQI Plan is modified to reflect Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). It is updated annually to ensure that data from quarterly reviews and other evaluation activities are incorporated into the assessment of agency accomplishments.

In FFY2015, to address the requirements of the DOJ consent Decree, ORS instituted a CRP/Supported Employment sub-committee to the CQI committee which has focused on development of a vendor certification process.

Through the use of program management, evaluation, and CQI activities, agency staff at all levels of the organization have participated in and contributed to strategic planning and program evaluation. A structured Customer Satisfaction Survey process is included in the CQI Plan to obtain feedback from customers closed in employed, status 26, and unemployed after receipt of services, status 28, and is conducted on a quarterly basis.

In FFY2015, ORS sent 587 surveys to customers closed employed with a return rate of 13.45% (79 surveys). Themes from these surveys suggested the following areas for consideration in service delivery: (1) continued focus by ORS on quality employment outcomes, (2) educate customers on lifelong learning, training, and on-the-job training to support job retention and/or advancement, (3) ensure customers' understanding of informed choice in obtaining employment that matches their stated goals and interest, (4) ensure information dissemination to customers of their future ability to access ORS services. Respondents did continue to indicate that they would refer a family member or friend for services.

Additionally, ORS sent 251 satisfaction surveys to customers closed unsuccessfully after receiving services. The return rate was 10.36% (26 surveys). Themes from these surveys included: (1) ensure timely response to receipt of an application, scheduled opportunities to meet, and monitor customer movement toward objectives with increased contact at time of plan implementation; (2) inform customers of VR process and services that support their making decisions about goals and needs prior to IPE development; and (3) ensure information dissemination to customers of their future ability to access ORS services if applicable.

In FFY2016 ORS initiated the sending of 80 Supported Employment Surveys to customers closed as employed with a 22.5% (18 surveys) return rate. Eight of the respondents utilized assistance to complete the survey. Themes noted included: 15 of the respondents indicated receipt of SSI/SSDI, with 9 indicating having met with Benefit Specialist of which 7 strongly agreed/agreed the information provided was helpful. 16 to 17 of the respondents indicated coming to ORS for a job, they were assisted with plan development, listened to by staff, received services when they needed them, and assisted with job keeping. 15 indicated they are still working and understood they could call ORS for support and services post case closure, and 16 would refer a family member or friend for services. Also in FFY2016, ORS initiated a Supported Employment Satisfaction Survey to 47 individuals closed unsuccessfully after receiving service with 7 returns (15%). 6 of the 7 respondents strongly agreed/agreed that: they came to ORS with help in finding a job, staff listened to them, treated them with respect, and

developed the IPE with them. All respondents received Social Security, with 3 indicating having met with Benefit Specialist, 2 finding the information useful and 4 no answer and 3 were afraid of benefits loss. 6 respondents reported their disability prevented them from working, 4 did not understand services, and 2 indicated services took too long. None of the respondents are working and 6 of the 7 knew they could contact ORS for future help with employment. 4 of the 7 respondents had assistance with completing the survey. Aggregate findings of satisfaction surveys are shared with administration, supervisors, and direct service staff. ORS will continue to assess the feedback on Supported Employment services from our customers for themes related to positive program delivery and program improvement.

In FFY2015 with the resources of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor IIs, ORS re-established a formal case review process to take place twice a year. As identified through CQI activities and/or administration additional case reviews are scheduled.

Strategic Planning/QI Supervisor continued to play an active role with the electronic case management system: Liaison to ECM system vendor, remediation of case entry/data concerns and system issues, and ongoing system development and training of staff.

In compliance with the regulatory requirements of 34CFR361.29, ORS completed a CNA in the second half of FFY2013 through first half of FFY2014 for inclusion in the FFY2015 State Plan. This process included staff and community surveys; customer satisfaction surveys; meetings with staff; public forums; and review of agency and RSA data and environmental data. The findings of the most recent CNA are included in Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment. ORS will be looking to implement a new CNA for inclusion in the 2018 State Plan.

The Strategic Planning/QI Supervisor is an active participant in the New England VR Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance Group (NEPEQA) and the Summit Group. The NEPEQA group, at the request of the NE VR Administrators, created a New England Vocational Rehabilitation Quality Assurance System reference document which was presented at the 7th Annual Vocational Program Evaluation & Quality Assurance Summit held in Kentucky, September 2014, and the Rehabilitation Program Evaluation Network of the National Rehabilitation Association. Technical Assistance about CQI and program evaluation has been provided through the above entities.

V. **THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA**

- RSA STANDARDS AND INDICATORS:

The performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY2015:

ORS met RSA Standard I - VR's impact on employment and Standard II - Minority Service Rate for FFY2015.

ORS maintained a focus on increasing quality employment outcomes as per the CNA Strategic Plan and RSA 107 monitoring report. In October of 2015 R.I. had the highest unemployment rate

in New England with 5.4%. While Indicator 1.5 was not met, ORS saw improvement for the third consecutive year with an average hourly wage of \$ 12.05 for FFY 2015. This represents an increase from the FFY 2014 hourly wage of \$11.46.

Evaluation Standard 1 - Employment Outcomes

Performance Indicator 1.1: In FFY2015, ORS achieved 643 successful employment outcomes. This is an increase from the FFY 2014's 608 successful employment outcomes.

Performance Indicator 1.2: ORS exceeded the Federal Standard of 55.8% for the rehabilitation rate. FFY 2015 saw an increase in the rehabilitation rate to 69.2% from the FFY 2014 rate of 59.61%

Performance Indicator 1.3: ORS exceeded the Federal Standard earnings ratio of 72.6% in FFY 2015 with a rate of 99.7%, which represents an increase from FFY 2014 rate of 99.3%

Performance Indicator 1.4: ORS exceeded the Federal Standard of 62.40%, with a rate of 100% for both FFY 2015 and 2014.

Performance Indicator 1.5: ORS continues face challenges in meeting this indicator in part due to the RI economy and did not meet the Federal Standard of .52%. ORS saw a slight improvement over the FFY 2014 rate of .50% with an average hourly rate of .51% earned by individuals in FFY 2015. An additional challenge is the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data runs about three quarters behind which impacts the ability to accurately calculate and monitor progress toward this goal.

Performance Indicator 1.6: ORS continues to exceed the federal standard of .53%. The number of individuals whose own income at the time of exit from services was their largest source of support was 64.3% in FFY 2015. This result represents a slight decrease from FFY 2014 rate of 64.4%.

Evaluation Standard 2 - Equal Access to Services

Performance Indicator 2.1: ORS met the standard of .80% for services and employment outcomes for minorities who are disabled for FFY2015 with a rate of .84%. This also represents an increase from the FFY2014 with a rate of .80%.

VI. HOW THE FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED.

- I& E funds were used to support the licensing fees for two Project Search pilots as part of the ORS PETS initiative.
-
- ORS utilized I&E funds for State Rehabilitation Council and State Independent Living Council activities.

6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.
Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

Include the following:

- (1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.
- (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

I. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

OVERVIEW OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) continues to provide supported employment services – requirements of WIOA, RSA and the RI Department of Justice settlement -- as a means to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to have access to the supports needed to participate in integrated competitive employment opportunities. ORS has maintained involvement with two Supported Employment (SE) Advisory Councils for Developmental Disabilities and Behavioral Health, representation on the Developmental Disabilities Council, and the RI Transition Council. ORS participates on multiple committees, task groups and in various arenas to discuss employment expectations with customers, providers, and families. ORS is committed to providing and improving Supported Employment services to ORS customers. For those customers who meet the supported employment criteria, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) becomes the foundation for meeting customers' individualized supported employment needs. The IPE defines the employment goal, the timeline, services, and long-term support/vendor who will continue to provide support services to the individual with disability on a long-term basis. These long-term support providers are identified in a signed agreement of understanding, which is signed by the vendor agency and ORS.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY:

ORS has employment services that are available to adults and in-school youth found eligible for Supported Employment Services. The values and principles of ORS to make integrated competitive employment available to all individuals with disabilities has been reinforced by a state of RI settlement with the Department of Justice (DOJ). This recently negotiated Consent Decree (CD) and Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA), between RI and DOJ, resulted in a Governor's proclamation declaring that RI is an Employment First state. The principles and practices of Employment First, consistent with the mission of ORS and the mandate of the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA), are utilized in planning and service delivery to adults, in-school youth, and out-of-school youth.

The DOJ court order requires three state agencies: (1) Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), (2) the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and (3) the Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to develop and implement a service

delivery system that ensures individuals, adults and youth, have access to the services and supports that lead to integrated competitive employment opportunities as the first and desired outcome of state funded services. Although ORS has not funded workshop settings for over 15 years, other funding streams continued to direct resources to segregated workshops and day programs. Staff resources were therefore unavailable to support integrated competitive employment efforts for adults and transition-age youth with significant behavioral health and developmental disabilities. The DOJ settlement mandated RI to create a state-wide Supported Employment service delivery system that ensures adults and youth with I/DD are afforded full access to Supported Employment Services and long term supports to maintain employment.

The three state entities have developed a Transition timeline for staff, families, and school personnel to clarify each agency's obligations to implement the DOJ requirements for in-school youth's access to employment exploration and work experiences. ORS has had a Cooperative agreement with RIDE for over 16 years and a very robust presence at each high school in the state. The ORS Rehabilitation Counselor functions as a liaison, consultant and referral source to the transition personnel of each high school in the state. ORS has been providing a wide array of transition services since the inception of the Cooperative Agreement to in-school youth with disabilities, including youth with I/DD. The array of Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) services for in-school youth with disabilities include: Vocational Evaluations and assessments; Community Based Work Experiences, participation in Transition Academies and ORS/LEA Summer Employment experiences; Summer Work, Project Search, and other work activities. The array of ORS PETS transition services in place for both in-school youth with disabilities and those youth eligible for supported employment services meet the requirements of WIOA and the DOJ Consent Decree.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AGENCY NETWORK:

ORS has a long standing history of collaboration with the RI agency responsible for services to individuals with developmental disabilities – Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). ORS funds an array of Supported Employment services for adults and youth with Developmental Disabilities through a fee-for-service arrangement with a network of ORS approved Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). Many of these Supported Employment (SE) CRPs are also licensed by BHDDH to provide residential, case management, and support services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

ORS has a referral, liaison, and consultative relationship with the CRPs and funds a continuum of Supported Employment services, through the customer selected CRP. The objective of the SE services is an integrated competitive employment outcome. ORS, as a leader, trainer, and funding source of supported employment services, engages CRPs -- who also rely on BHDDH funding -- to provide the long-term supports that help sustain employment. Long-term supports are planned for and included in the customer's ORS Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These plans are individualized and define the scope and duration of each supported employment service. The IPE also identifies the CRP that is accepting responsibility for long term and intermittent support services to the individual with a disability. The time frame for transitioning a customer from the support services of both ORS and the CRP to the extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer. ORS has been working

with CRPs who provide Supported Employment Services to improve the quality and availability of employment related services. As the funding source, ORS holds a quarterly meeting with all of the I/DD Supported Employment CRP's to ensure consistency in service delivery, appropriate employment outcomes are being reached and to offer support and guidance to the providers.

ORS has taken the lead on identifying and establishing qualifications for employees of mental health agencies and developmental disability agencies to ensure that staff have the expertise appropriate for the vocational services being provided to ORS clients. ORS has been working with the Sherlock Center of Disabilities in order to identify, develop, plan, and execute training for employees of ORS approved provider networks. Attending to the training needs of CRPs is an ongoing commitment. The CRP Supervisor actively meets with providers/vendors who provide Supported Employment (SE) services in order to re-enforce the philosophy of Employment First. The CRP supervisor, in collaboration with field supervisors, counselors, and ORS administrators, is actively involved in meetings with potential vendors to discuss becoming a Supported Employment vendor for ORS. These meetings with CRPs provide an opportunity to address concerns and questions as well as clarify the elements of a quality employment outcome. ORS participates on the two Supported Employment Advisory Councils as a means of dedicating resources and reinforcing a commitment to integrated competitive employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

ORS will continue to encourage CRPs to collaborate with each other, through a quarterly meeting sponsored by ORS, to meet the diverse employment needs of significantly disabled individuals with intellectual and behavioral health issues. This collaboration is also encouraged at individual and joint meetings of the BHDDH, Divisions of DD and BH Supported Employment Councils. Some ORS customers not eligible for the long-term supports provided by DD or BH agencies have significant functional limitations and could benefit from the supports and job coaching expertise of SE agencies, with an overall goal of increasing integrated, competitive employment outcomes. SE customers have increased the average number of hours employed, however, ORS is continuing to work with staff and vendors on improving the quality of the jobs, salary, and benefits for its' supported employment population. A new service delivery model and fee structure designed and implemented in 4/13 is being re-evaluated in FFY2017.

II. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

ORS, as a partner and funding source of supported employment services, engages CRPs to provide the extended supports that help sustain employment for individuals with significant disabilities. Long-term supports, generally funded by Behavioral Health, Developmental Disability and Hospitals (BHDDH), are planned for and included in the ORS customers' Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE is based on the needs of the customer and define the scope, specific services and duration of each supported employment component. The IPE also identifies that the CRP that accepts responsibility for providing the long term and intermittent support services, funded by BHDDH, in order to maintain employment. This shift in service-delivery responsibility is well coordinated by the ORS counselor and vendor agency staff, so that there will be a seamless and continuous delivery of needed services to the individual. The time frame for transitioning a customer from the support services provided by both ORS and the CRP to the extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program Elements

BLOCK GRANT FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) 42 U.S.C. SEC. 402

1. OUTLINE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

General Provisions.

(i) Conduct a program, designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with the job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) is the state agency responsible for administration of the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. DHS is also responsible for implementation of the Rhode Island Works Act of 2008, the State's welfare reform legislation. Together, these federal and state programs provide essential services for low-income families throughout the state to assist them in meeting their basic family needs while at the same time providing parents with a range of work supports to help them prepare for and access the job market.

In accord with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the State of Rhode Island has developed its TANF State Plan based upon the four major purposes of TANF, which are to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in his or her own home or in the home of a relative;
- End dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Rhode Island Works Program

The R.I. General Assembly revised the state TANF law in June 2008 (RIGL 40-5.2). Entitled the Rhode Island Works Act, it was designed to help low income families toward independence while at the same time improving the State's efforts to achieve the required TANF Work Participation Rates. Since 2008, the General Assembly has made two clarifying adjustments to the law. The first occurred in June 2009. It clarified that the start date of the intermediate time limit (24 months in any 60 month period) was July 1, 2008. The second occurred in June 2010 and affirmed that any RI Works' approvable activity could follow from the assessment of RI Works participants. This was broadening, as the original iteration of the RI Works Act required that almost all RI Works participants be required to Job Search as the first activity of the employment plan.

Most significant among the changes were: new time limits on receipt of cash assistance, new work activities consistent with TANF requirements, full engagement of families in activities leading to economic independence from public assistance {including appropriate and realistic employment plans for individuals with disabilities}; and a formal collaboration with the R.I. Department of Labor and Training which operates the one-stop career centers.

Eligibility for R.I. Works/TANF Program:

A “family” is defined for the RI Works/TANF cash assistance program as (a) a pregnant woman from and including the seventh month of her pregnancy; or (b) a child and the following eligible persons living in the same household as the child: (A) each biological, adoptive or stepparent of the child, or in the absence of a parent, any adult relative who is responsible, in fact, for the care of such child, and (B) the child’s minor siblings (whether of whole or half blood): provided, however, that the term “family” shall not include any person receiving benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. _ 1381 et seq. A family may be the same as the Assistance Unit.

A low-income family includes a child under the age of 18, or 19 if a full-time student, and family income is 225% of the federal poverty level or below.

An eligible family must meet age, relationship, citizenship/alienage, residency, and cooperation requirements, as well as remain within the income and resource limits of the program. As long as single parents and two (2) parent families meet income and resource limits of the program and are otherwise eligible, they qualify for cash assistance, child care, supplemental nutrition assistance (formerly referred to as food stamps); and health care coverage.

Eligibility is limited to families whose available resources (reduced by any obligations or debts with respect to such resources) total less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000). With regard to vehicle ownership, the State has chosen to exclude as a resource one (1) vehicle for each adult household member, not to exceed two (2) vehicles per household. Eligibility is denied or terminated if the value of non-exempt resources exceeds the one thousand dollar limit.

To determine eligibility for cash assistance, the total of a family’s countable earned income (after an earned income disregard of the first \$180/month and one half the remainder of earnings) and unearned income is compared with the appropriate assistance payment standard for the unit. The payment standard is equal to the sum of the following:

- For the first person: three hundred twenty-seven dollars (\$327) or two hundred seventy-seven dollars (\$277) for a family residing in subsidized housing;
- For the second person: one hundred twenty-two dollars (\$122)
- For the third person: one hundred five dollars (\$105) AND
- For each additional person: eighty dollars (\$80) for each additional person.

Cooperation with the child support enforcement agency is required as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance.

To continue to be counted as a family member for the purpose of cash assistance, a child is allowed temporary absences from the home for no more than ninety (90) days per episode, with a second ninety (90) day renewal authorized only through supervisory approval. The program requires minor parents to live with a parent, relative, or in a supervised setting and remain in school, unless otherwise authorized by the Department for specific good cause reasons and the minor resides in an approved supervised supportive living arrangement.

Rhode Island Works Program Time Limits: The Rhode Island Works law (RIGL 40-5.2) provides cash assistance for twenty-four (24) months in any sixty (60) month period with a maximum total of forty-eight (48) months on cash assistance. The new R.I. Works time limits applied 7/1/2008 to all new applicants, but recipients on 7/1/2008 were given a one-year grace to 7/1/2009 at which time the time limits were to take effect. The exception was that any recipient who sooner than 7/1/2008 reached their respective 60 months of cash assistance would have his/her cash assistance case closed at 60 months. In June 2009, the General Assembly amended RIGL 40-5.2 to set the effective date for “24 months in 60 months” time limit to begin at 7/1/2008, therefore, no family reached this 24 month time limit until 6/30/2010.

Time limits begin with the first issuance of cash assistance. An applicant is required to sign an Employment Plan as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance. Some recipients are exempted from immediate work activities such as parents who are waived under the Domestic Violence Waiver process.

Time limits apply to families in which citizen children receive assistance although their non-citizen parents do not.

Exceptions to time limits apply in the instances of: (1) a minor child(ren) living with a single parent who receives SSI benefits, or with two-parents who both receive SSI benefits, and (2) a minor child(ren) living with a legally responsible non-parent caretaker relative who is not in the cash assistance payment.

Hardship Extension to Time Limit: Any individual approaching either time limit is notified that s/he may request a reassessment to determine whether or not s/he meets the criteria for an extension to time limit. Additionally, any parent who has met or exceeded the time limit may reapply and be assessed to determine if s/he meets any of the criteria for an extension beyond the time limit.

A parent who is undocumented, who has received benefits for his/her citizen child(ren), may request a hardship extension for the child(ren) at either time limit. A parent who does not meet the alienage requirements required for eligibility for cash assistance under federal PRWORA (e.g., those Legal Permanent Resident families in which the parent has been in the United States less than five (5) years), who has received benefits for her/his citizen child(ren), may also request a hardship extension for the child(ren).

A hardship extension may be granted to all otherwise eligible families who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- has a documented significant physical or mental incapacity and can verify/document a

pending application for SSI or SSDI and has submitted an application for or is active and making progress in her/his Employment Plan with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS); or

- is caring for a significantly disabled family member who resides in the home and requires full time care; or
- is homeless—meaning a lack of a fixed and regular nighttime residence or a primary nighttime residence, such as a supervised shelter, a halfway house, a temporary residence, a temporary accommodation (e.g., hotel/motel), a residence of another for not more than ninety days, or a place not designed for regular sleeping accommodations (e.g., bus station);
- is unable to pursue employment because of a current, documented domestic violence situation; or
- is unable to work because of a critical other condition or circumstance, other than citizenship or alienage status.

For TANF program purposes, families extended beyond sixty (60) months of TANF cash assistance under the categories listed above will be included in the federally-funded twenty percent (20%) hardship exceptions.

(ii) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to engage in work (as defined by the State) once the state determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier.

Work Requirements and Participation Requirements under R.I. Works Program

All parents and caretaker relatives (including those who are acting in loco parentis, if they are included in the cash assistance grant) who request and receive assistance are required to enter into an employment plan and participate, unless temporarily exempt, in DHS-approved work-related activities.

One Parent Family

Single parents shall participate for a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is under the age of six (6), and for a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is six (6) years of age or older, in one or more of the following work activities, as appropriate, in order to help the parent obtain stable full-time paid employment. For teen parents, the first activity must be secondary education or completion of a GED program, if either certificate has not yet been obtained.

Core Activities for One Parent Families:

- Unsubsidized employment;

- Subsidized private sector employment;
- Subsidized public sector employment;
- Work experience. A parent participating in a work experience or community service program for the maximum number of hours per week allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be considered to have met their required twenty (20) core hours if actual participation falls short of the required minimum hours per week (RI has a mini-simplified Food Stamp waiver). For parents whose youngest child is six (6) or more years old and whose required minimum hours per week are thirty (30), any hours permissible by FLSA that are short of thirty (30) hours must be satisfied in some other TANF work activity;
- On-the-job training;
- Job search and job readiness. Except in the context of rehabilitation employment plans, job search and job readiness activities are limited to 4 consecutive weeks, or for a total of 6 weeks in a twelve-month period.

The DHS, in consultation with the DLT, shall extend job search and job readiness assistance for up to twelve (12) weeks in a fiscal year if RI has an unemployment rate at least fifty percent (50%) greater than the United States federal unemployment rate, or if the state meets the definition of a needy state under the contingency fund provisions of federal law;

- Community Service;
- Vocational educational training not to exceed twelve (12) months. Participation in a two-year degree program, a vocational certificate program, or a BA degree or advanced degree program may count as vocational educational training. Those participants who are in programs longer than twelve (12) months may use this activity as counting toward participation in a non-core job skills training, if they meet the requirement for a different core activity for sufficient hours.

All supervised homework plus up to one hour of unsupervised homework per each hour of class time may count as meeting part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan. However, total homework time cannot exceed the hours required or advised in writing by the educational program;

- Adult education in an intensive work readiness program
- Child care for an individual participating in a community service program.

Non-core Activities for One Parent Families:

- Job skills training directly related to employment (allowable in addition to participation for twenty (20) hours per week in one of the above core activities);
- Education directly related to employment (allowable in addition to participation for

twenty (20) hours per week in one of the above core activities); and

- Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or in a course of study leading to a GED. In the case of a parent under the age of 20, such satisfactory attendance in secondary school or in a GED program is countable as a core activity.

Other Required Work Activities for One Parent Families:

- Up to ten (10) hours of activities as defined in a DCYF service plan may substitute for meeting an equivalent number of hours toward the twenty (20) hour requirement for parents with a child under age six (6), or for an equivalent number of hours toward the thirty (30) hour requirement for parents whose youngest child is age six (6) or older. The DCYF Social Caseworker II provides the actual number of hours of participation per week required in order for the parent to comply with their service plan. The RI Works Social Caseworker then makes these hours part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan.

Temporary Exemption for Single Parents

Work requirements outlined above shall not apply to a single parent if (and for so long as) the Department finds that s/he is:

- Caring for a child below the age of one, provided that a parent may opt for deferral for a maximum of twelve (12) months during any twenty-four (24) months in sixty (60) month period of eligibility for cash assistance, but noting that a minor parent without a high school diploma or the equivalent, shall not be exempt for more than twelve (12) weeks from the birth of the child;
- Caring for a child or family member with a significant documented disability who resides in the home and requires full-time care;
- A recipient of SSI or RSDI/SSDI or other disability benefit that has the same standards of disability as defined by the Social Security Administration;
- An RIW applicant or recipient who has completed an application for SSI or SSDI who has been determined by a designated DHS provider to be likely to become eligible for SSI or SSDI;
- An individual receiving assistance who is a victim of domestic violence; and
- An applicant for assistance in her third trimester of pregnancy or a pregnant woman in her third trimester who is a recipient of assistance and who has medical documentation that she cannot work.

Two Parent Family Requirements

In families consisting of two parents, one parent is required and shall be engaged in work activities as defined below, for at least thirty-five (35) hours per week during the month, not

fewer than thirty (30) hours per week of which are attributable to one or more of the following listed work activities. Two parent work requirements shall be defined as follows:

Core Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Unsubsidized employment;
- Subsidized private sector employment;
- Subsidized public sector employment;
- Work experience;
- On-the-job training;
- Job search and job readiness. Except in the context of rehabilitation employment plans, job search and job readiness activities are limited to 4 consecutive weeks, or for a total of 6 weeks in a twelve-month period. The DHS, in consultation with the DLT, shall extend job search and job readiness assistance for up to twelve (12) weeks in a fiscal year if RI has an unemployment rate at least fifty percent (50%) greater than the United States federal unemployment rate, or if the state meets the definition of a needy state under the contingency fund provisions of federal law;
- Community service program;
- Vocational educational training not to exceed twelve (12) months;
- The provision of child care services to a participant individual who is participating in a community service program;
- Adult education in an intensive work readiness program not to exceed six (6) months.

Above thirty (30) hours per week, the following three (3) activities may also count for participation:

Non-Core Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Job skills training directly related to employment;
- Education directly related to employment; and
- Satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence. Satisfactory attendance in secondary school or in a GED program is countable as a core activity in the case of a parent who is married and is under twenty (20) years old.

Other Required Work Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Up to ten (10) hours of activities as defined in a DCYF service plan may substitute for meeting an equivalent number of hours toward the thirty-five (35) hour requirement. The DCYF Social Caseworker II provides the actual number of hours

of participation per week required in order for the parent to comply with their service plan. The RI Works Social Caseworker then makes these hours part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan.

- Housing search, if the family is homeless (or about to become homeless), may be approved for the second parent in a two parent family, if the first parent is participating in a core activity at least thirty (30) hours per week. This activity may be approved for the first parent, if the second parent receives SSI/RSDI/SSDI. Housing search is classified as job readiness, which is a core activity.

In a two parent family in which one (1) parent is engaged for at least thirty-five (35) hours per week in the work activities specified above, the other, second, parent may also participate in and have an assessment completed. The second parent must sign the employment plan.

A family with two parents, whether or not receiving child care, in which one or both parents participate in a work experience or community service program for the maximum number of hours per week allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be considered to have met their required thirty (30) core hours if actual participation falls short of the required minimum hours per week (RI has a mini-simplified Food Stamp waiver). For families that need additional hours beyond the core activity requirement, these hours must be satisfied in some other TANF work activity.

Except in the instance of a work experience or community service program which must meet the requirements of the FLSA as described above, if the family receives child care assistance and an adult in the family is not disabled or caring for a severely disabled child, then the work-eligible individuals must be participating in work activities for an average of at least fifty-five (55) hours per week to count as a two-parent family engaged in work for the month. At least fifty (50) of the fifty-five (55) hours per week must come from participation in the activities listed in the Core Activities above. Above fifty (50) hours per week, the three (3) activities listed in Non-Core Activities above may also count as participation.

Teen Two-Parent Family Requirements

In a two-parent household in which both parents are under age twenty (20), the DHS social caseworker should assess the educational history of both parents. For either parent who has not completed high school or obtained a GED, as a first activity in the RI Works program the screening social caseworker should approve an employment plan and enter an EASC for that parent (or for both parents if neither have the high school diploma or GED) that shows full time attendance in secondary education (high school) or completion of a GED program as the first activity. When both have either reached the age of twenty (20) or completed the first activity of education as described above, all two parent family rules will come into full force and effect.

Exemptions for Two-Parent Families

The work requirements shall not apply if (and for so long as) the Department finds that:

- both parents receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); or

- both parents have completed applications for SSI or SSDI and both have been determined by a designated DHS provider to be likely to become eligible for SSI or SSDI; or
- one parent is caring for a child or family member with a significant documented disability who resides in the home, and who requires full time care and the other parent receives SSI/RSDI/SSDI and is medically documented to be unable to provide care for the disabled family member.

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)

The term ‘electronic benefit transfer transaction’ means the use of a credit or debit card service, automated teller machine, point-of-sale terminal, or access to an online system for the withdrawal of funds or the processing of a payment for merchandise or a service. Payment of RI Works Program cash benefits through an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system is authorized by R.I.G.L. 40-5.2-31. Cash benefits are credited to an EBT account in the recipient's name by 5:00 a.m. on the first and sixteenth of the month including weekends and holidays.

Recipients and authorized payees access EBT cash benefits by using a plastic Rhode Island EBT card and their personal identification number (PIN). The RI EBT system provides access to cash benefits at bank, credit union, and retail store automated teller machines (ATMs) which display the NYCE logo. Some retail establishments also provide access to cash accounts at point-of-sale (POS) terminals which display the QUEST logo. This service is called a cash back transaction and policies on its availability and limits on the amount of cash dispensed are set by the individual store.

Each month, recipients can make a total of four (4) free cash withdrawals from ATMs. For each additional ATM cash withdrawal in the month, a fee of 85 cents is charged. The fee is automatically deducted from the recipient's cash benefit account. No fee is charged when cash benefits are accessed at POS terminals.

RI EBT cards are issued in all RI Works district offices using special card embossing and PIN selection machines. Cardholders must report lost, stolen, or damaged RI EBT cards to the Deluxe Customer Service Help Line at 1-888-979-9939. A Customer Service Representative invalidates the card thereby protecting the unused benefit amounts. If someone uses the card before its status has been changed, the benefits can not be replaced. No fee is charged for the replacement of any lost, stolen, or damaged RI EBT card. Cardholders may request a new card by contacting the local DHS office and completing a DHS EBT-10, EBT Replacement Form. Replacement RI EBT cards are mailed by noon the next business day after the authorization file has been successfully transmitted.

EBT Restrictions

Pursuant to Section 4004 of Public Law 112-96, it is prohibited for a TANF recipient to use their TANF cash assistance benefits received under RI Works, Rhode Island General Laws 40-5.2 et seq., in any electronic benefit transfer transaction (EBT) in --

- any liquor store;

- any casino, gambling casino, or gaming establishment; or
- any retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment.

DEFINITIONS- For purposes of above--

LIQUOR STORE- The term 'liquor store' means any retail establishment which sells exclusively or primarily intoxicating liquor. Such term does not include a grocery store which sells both intoxicating liquor and groceries including staple foods (within the meaning of section 3(r) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(r))).

CASINO, GAMBLING CASINO, OR GAMING ESTABLISHMENT- The terms 'casino', 'gambling casino', and 'gaming establishment' do not include--

- a grocery store which sells groceries including such staple foods and which also offers, or is located within the same building or complex as, casino, gambling, or gaming activities; or
- any other establishment that offers casino, gambling, or gaming activities incidental to the principal purpose of the business.

It is illegal to withdraw TANF benefits from an ATM located in one of the prohibited locations, or to use TANF benefits at a point of sale (POS) terminal located in a prohibited location.

Rhode Island will compile a report of the EBT restricted transaction quarterly. Any person receiving cash assistance through the RI Works Program who uses an EBT card in violation shall be subject to the following penalties:

* For the first violation, the household will be sent a warning that a prohibited transaction occurred;

* For the second violation, the household will be charged a penalty in the amount of the EBT transaction that occurred at the prohibited location;

* For the third and all subsequent violations, the household will be charged a penalty in the amount of the EBT transaction that occurred at the prohibited location AND for the month following the month of infraction, the amount of cash assistance to which an otherwise eligible recipient family is entitled shall be reduced by the portion of the family's benefit attributable to any parent who utilized the EBT card in a restricted location. For a family size of two (2), the benefit reduction due to noncompliance with use of EBT at a restricted location shall be computed utilizing a family size of three (3), in which the parent's portion equals one hundred five dollars (\$105).

If an individual believes that the intended action regarding usage of EBT cash at restricted locations is incorrect, s/he may request a hearing before the Executive Office of Human Services Hearing Officer within thirty (30) days of the mailing of the notice of adverse action.

The individual may request that benefits be continued pending the outcome of the hearing if the request is made within ten (10) days of the mailing of the notice.

Description of Public Involvement in the Administration of Rhode Island TANF Program:

Since passage of PRWORA in August 1996 and the implementation of Rhode Island's own welfare reform legislation in May 1997, R.I. DHS has maintained a strong and viable partnership with the initial Welfare Reform Implementation Task Force (WRITF).

With the recently enacted Rhode Island Works Program, the WRITF group is now known as the Rhode Island Works Advisory Committee. The membership consists of representatives of state agencies, anti-poverty organizations, and community-based organizations that are committed to assisting the State and the Department in efforts to deliver an effective program for low-income families.

As defined by the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) and HHS Administration for Children and Families TANF State Plan requirements, draft rules on the R.I. Works Program were published on November 9, 2011, comments were formally heard and submitted to the Department for consideration by December 8, 2011. The Department has used the promulgation period to inform and support updates to the TANF State Plan.

The Rhode Island Works Program Advisory Committee has met monthly or bimonthly and receives progress reports, reviews and comments on policy and regulations, and offers recommendations to the Director on best practices and effective solutions to challenges and opportunities facing the State of Rhode Island.

Through both the formal public hearing process as well as the ongoing advisory committee meetings, the State of Rhode Island continues its commitment of transparency and openness with regard to its public assistance programs. The Department will continue to work closely with the community to ensure continuous improvement in our progress toward helping families out of poverty.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funded Services:

The State of Rhode Island expends funds to administer and support a range of benefits and services to assist low income needy children and families. For purposes of Rhode Island's TANF State Plan, the definition of low income needy family means a family which includes a dependent child(ren) under age 18, or 19 if full-time student, and a parent/caretaker relative with a gross household income level which is at or below 225% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). While it is recognized that income and resource limits may differ somewhat from program to program, in order to receive benefits or services through programs described in this section of the R. I. TANF State Plan, a family must meet this state's definition of low income.

For purposes of the subsidized employment programs supported by the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund under ARRA, a low-income family also meant a non-custodial parent who is responsible for child support for a child under the age of 18 who is living in the home of the custodial parent or relative who is receiving some form of public support on behalf of the child, including cash assistance, SNAP, Medical Assistance, or Child Care subsidies. Both the non-custodial parent and the custodial family must have been low-income. In addition, low-income family also meant older youth, ages 18, 19, and 20, who were members of a low-income family which included a child under the age of 18.

The following outlines those benefits and services which are/were funded as either a Segregated State Program or Separate State Program and meet/met one or more of the four purposes of TANF and thus qualify as state maintenance of effort (MOE) expenditures, claimable under TANF regulations.

Segregated and/or Separate State Programs:

- **Child Care Assistance for both cash assistance and non-cash low income working families** – Child care subsidies are provided to active R.I. Works parents engaged in work activities and for all low income working families engaged in employment for 20 or more hours per week, as well as low income youth enrolled with the Youth Success program who are completing their high school diploma or GED with employment for 20 hours/week. Current eligibility criteria for non-cash assistance parents who meet the income criteria are outlined in Rhode Island’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan.

Child Care Assistance ends dependence of needy families on government benefits by promoting job preparation and supporting working families. Consistent with TANF Purpose 2

- **State funded Head Start Services for low-income children** who are not able to be served through federally funded Head Start Programs - State-funded head start is a means tested program and accepts only those families who are determined low income needy as defined above. Children between 3 and 4 years of age benefit by school readiness programs and parent involvement which is required by all families and these parents gain information about adult education, job skills training and work opportunities, thus improving their ability to become economically independent. Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3, 4

- **Emergency Assistance and residential services for vulnerable youth, through the R.I. Department of Children, Youth and Families** - Emergency Assistance as allowed under prior law supports the maintenance of services for those families who would have qualified for EA under the prior program as described in Rhode Island’s State Plan in 1995. Services are provided to children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect, or at risk of abuse and neglect. EA is used for TANF MOE only to the extent that State-only dollars are expended to support the range of family intervention, counseling and case management services provided. State-funded residential services through DCYF, for those with active reunification plans, also provide a safe temporary environment for children as families seek stability. In such circumstances, children may be absent from the home for more than 180 days so long as reunification plans are maintained. These expenditures are not matched with any other federal or non-federal funding source. Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 3

- **Child Support Pass-through payments to children** - The state pass-through of eligible payments to children of non-custodial parents increases the family’s income, and supports the likelihood that the custodial parent’s household income will increase, by both regular child support payments and with the TANF work program, their ability to prepare for and enter the job market. Consistent with TANF Purpose 2

- **Rental Assistance Payments through the State Community Action Fund** - Rental assistance may be provided through CAP agencies using state-only dollars. Low income families qualify if they can demonstrate an ability to maintain themselves in the home or apartment and have a short term need for special assistance. The rental assistance payment may not exceed the State's maximum payment which cannot exceed \$600 per month for a maximum of 2 months. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 4
- **State funded low income heating assistance** - Low income families may receive state funded heating assistance during the year. This is administered by the R.I. Community Action Programs. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 4
- **State funded Supportive Housing and Development Services for low income families administered through Office of Housing and Community Development and Rhode Island Housing** - The State of Rhode Island supports housing for low income families who need help in transitioning to permanent housing, who may be working toward qualifying for the purchase of affordable housing, or who need emergency intervention to prevent the loss of otherwise stable housing. Stable housing is a core need of families who are trying to prepare for or maintain themselves in a job.- Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, and 4
- **Governor's Workforce Board job training and education for disadvantaged youth and adults** – The R.I. GWB has funded a significant number of programs throughout Rhode Island which are designed to provide low income youth and adults with job training and access to employment resources. Services include job finding skills and for many in Rhode Island, skill upgrading programs. Both youth and adults are either unemployed or underemployed and are held to a means tested application process. Some programs are geared to meet the special needs of young parents, both custodial and non-custodial parents. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3, and 4
- **State funded Adult Literacy Services** - Rhode Island has in effect adult education programs through Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). Additionally, RIDE has worked very closely with the TANF Program to create contextualized learning opportunities for low income parents who are not academically eligible for much post-secondary programming.. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3 and 4
- **Youth exiting the Juvenile Justice system and/or foster care system** - Intervention and Treatment Services administered by R.I. Family Court and/or Department of Children Youth and Families are essential services which help vulnerable youth to move into productive life skill/management programs. Services provided to youth are designed to insure that they avoid early pregnancy, graduate high school, follow appropriate healthy living habits, and have access to responsible and supportive adults either within their respective families or through mentorships provided by programs paid for with state-only dollars. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 3, and 4
- Under the category known as short-term, non-recurrent benefit programs, funds may emanate from state general revenue, charitable organizations, non-profit, or local government resources. Programs may include a benefit to a custodial parent in lieu of child support, a one-time benefit to those who qualify for Rhode Island's Earned Income

Tax Credit or to any low-income family, including those receiving some form of public support, and one-time benefits may take any form, including but not limited to, food, restoration of utilities or avoidance of utility shut-offs, appliance replacement to enable food storage or meal preparation, auto repairs, or other basic necessities - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 2

- State-funded higher education grants to low-income youth helps families prepare older youth for careers - Consistent with TANF Purposes 2 and 3

Systems for tracking and managing funding streams, beneficiary education, training, work activities, and other child and families support programs are in place as well as data reporting to meet requirements outlined in Final TANF Regulations. Administrative costs for technology would also be claimable as MOE under the State's TANF Program.

Non-Assistance

The state supports several other MOE-funded services for low-income needy families including, but not limited to, recurring short-term benefits, as noted below.

1) Short-term Cash Assistance or Benefit Programs

Under R.I. Works Program, the state may implement a short term (not more than 4 consecutive months) cash payment or benefit program for qualifying applicants for cash assistance and low income families. The state may also provide non-recurrent, short-term benefits to low income families while TANF Emergency Contingency Funds, or its successor legislation, is available to these families.

2) State Earned Income Tax Credit

The Rhode Island State Earned Income Tax Credit (SEITC) has both a non-refundable as well as a refundable tax credit which is based upon twenty-five (25%) percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. Consistent with R.I.G.L. 44-20-2.6 (d) and 44-30-98, Article 30, Rhode Island taxpayers filing for State EITC who meet both financial eligibility criteria as defined by federal tax law to claim EITC, and who have at least one (1) dependent child in their family, will receive a refundable amount equal to up to twenty-five (25%) percent of the federal EITC. The Rhode Island General Assembly may legislatively adjust, from time to time, the percentage of the federal rate used by this state, to determine the State EITC amount refunded to low income working families.

3) Disaster Relief

The State of Rhode Island provides short-term non-recurrent benefits to victims who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina and/or Hurricane Rita and other officially declared disasters from time to time.

4) Property Tax Relief for Income Eligible Home Owners and Renters

The State of Rhode Island provides property tax relief in the form of tax refunds to individuals

65 and older, disabled individuals as well as non-disabled/non-elderly individuals and families who meet income eligibility requirements and who file for such tax refunds. Consistent with R.I.G.L. 44-33, the refundable tax credit is based upon the amount that property taxes or rent constituting property taxes exceeds the amount of the low income thresholds established in law and for purposes of TANF MOE, the State would only claim expenditures paid to low income families.

4) Community-based Work, Training, Housing, Food Assistance, Emergency Needs, and Family Support and Development Programs for low income parents and children funded through state and local non-profit funding streams such as

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation, the United Way of Rhode Island, which collectively support a wide range of employment and training, shelter, food assistance, emergency needs and community development initiatives targeted to improve outcomes for youth and families in the areas of economic self-sufficiency. Only non-matched qualifying funds and services may be claimed toward Rhode Island's TANF MOE, including third-party and charitable contributions supporting the RI Community Food Bank's distribution of food to low income Rhode Island families.

5) State-funded Programs for Youth and Families administered through the Community Action Network.

Programs and services funded through the R.I. Community Action Network assist children and families throughout the state. These state funded programs and services meet at least one or more of the four purposes of TANF and include but are not limited to youth development, state funded nutrition programs, energy, early childhood programs, housing services programs.

6) State funded legislative grants to community based special programs and services.

The State legislature funds a wide range of programs and services which benefit the needs of families, children and the community. Family intervention services, truancy intervention, substance abuse counseling, transportation, youth mentoring, parenting, and other types of special programs are delivered to at-risk youth, children, and/or parents. These services meet at least one of the four purposes of TANF.

7) Adult Literacy and Job Training Development funded by the Governor's Workforce Board

State funded programs which target youth as well as custodial parents and non-custodial parents are provided throughout the state for those who need basic education, GED, and job skills in order to compete in the Rhode Island job market. Such programs improve the economic well-being of youth and families by assisting both unemployed, under-employed individuals, some of whom may be transitioning from youth training school or adult correctional institution and need re-entry services. These programs are administered through the R.I. Department of Labor and Training, Department of Corrections, as well as the R.I. Department of Education. These goals are consistent with all four purposes of TANF and thus meet the requirements for TANF-MOE.

8) State funded Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

In accord with DHS Policy Section 0402.10, Standards of Assistance, SSI State Supplements paid to children and parents receiving Supplemental Security Income. These payments augment the federally funded SSI payments and assist families who are typically unable to improve their household resources because they are either unable to work themselves or must remain in the home to care for a disabled child(ren).

(iii) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 407i.

Non-Compliance with Work Requirements

All parents and caretaker relatives not specifically exempted are required to participate in appropriate work activities. Failure to do so may result in a penalty if good cause is not provided for the non-participation. Current policy states: During the first three (3) months of noncompliance with work requirements, the amount of cash assistance to which an otherwise eligible family is entitled shall be reduced by the portion of the family's benefit attributable to any parent who, without good cause, has failed to enter into an individual employment plan or has failed to comply with his or her individual employment plan; provided that the reduction shall be applied during the first three (3) months, whether or not consecutive, of such failure or non-compliance by the parent.

For a family size of two (2), the benefit reduction due to noncompliance with the employment plan shall be computed utilizing a family size of three (3), in which the parent's portion equals one hundred five dollars (\$105).

After three (3) months of noncompliance, the Department shall terminate cash assistance to a family if any parent in the family has failed, without good cause, to enter into an individual employment plan, or to comply with his or her individual employment plan and has been penalized for three (3) months, whether or not consecutive.

The penalty becomes effective on the next payroll date after the adverse action period. The participant is notified of the penalty by an INRHODES-generated notice.

If the family's benefit has been reduced for less than three (3) months, whether or not consecutive, due to the parent's failure to enter into an individual employment plan or failure to comply with the terms of his or her individual employment plan, benefits shall be restored to the full amount beginning with the initial payment made on the first of the month following the month in which the parent (1) enters into an individual employment plan and demonstrates compliance with the terms thereof, or (2) demonstrates compliance with the terms of his or her existing individual employment plan, as such plan may be amended by agreement of the parent and the Department.

If the family's benefit has been terminated due to the failure by one or more parents to enter into an individual employment plan or failure to comply with the terms of his or her individual employment plan and has been penalized for three (3) months, the family may re-apply for benefits and benefits shall be restored to the family in the full amount the family is otherwise entitled to under this chapter beginning on the first of the month following the month in which all parents in the family who are subject to the employment plan requirements (1) enter into an

individual employment plan and demonstrate compliance with the terms thereof, or (2) demonstrate compliance with the terms of his or her existing individual employment plan, as such plan may be amended by agreement of the parent and the Department, i.e., the parent must sign a new Employment Plan, demonstrate compliance with the Plan for at least two (2) weeks, and continue to participate, for the penalty to be considered cured and the case accepted beginning with the first of the month following the month that she or he began to comply.

(iv) Take reasonable steps, as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

In accordance with the General Laws of Rhode Island 40-6-12 all records pertaining to the administration of public assistance are declared to constitute confidential matter. It is unlawful for any person to make use of, or cause to be used, any information contained in these records for purposes not directly connected with program administration, except with the consent of the individual concerned. Any person violating any provisions of this state law, or the lawful rules and regulations made there under will be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) or will be imprisoned for not more that six (6) months or both.

(v) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies and establish numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the State (as defined in section 403(a)(2)(B) for calendar years 1996 through 2005.

Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan

In accordance with the requirements of State PL 97, Chapter 176, DHS has had an active role in a formal partnership called the Rhode Island Alliance to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (formerly the Rhode Island Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership) with the Department of Health, Department of Education, the Department for Children, Youth and Families, and several community-based organizations, which was originally formed to address the complex issues of teenage pregnancy and to develop Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan. The Plan, which was completed in June 1999 and revised in 2004, is based on research findings, results of community forums, and professional expertise in teenage pregnancy prevention. The Plan was distributed to members of the R. I. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition, Governor's Office, and the General Assembly. The Plan contains information on federal and state funding sources, programs that educate at-risk teens, programs that provide pregnancy prevention education, a review of current literature pertaining to this topic, state level initiatives and financial resources for teach training. The Plan is being reviewed by the RI Alliance at this time, for possible further revision and updating.

The Prevention Plan updated in 2004 continued with its original nine (9) recommendations, along with progress achieved to date, and updated strategies to successfully implement the recommendations. Data reflects that the state exceeded its initial numerical goals for calendar years 1999 through 2004, and as a result the TANF State Plan defined new numeric goals for calendar years 2005 through 2008. These goals were well addressed and, as of 2009, Rhode Island's teen birth rate had declined to 26.8 per 1000 girls aged 15-19 years old, as compared with the national teen birth rate of 39.1 per 1000 girls. Rhode Island's teen birth rate is now the

9th lowest in the nation. Teen births are concentrated in four of the poorest communities, and efforts and resources are focused on those areas, in an attempt to reduce the rate there, further. Of special concern is the disparity between birth rate for those who are 18-19 years old (42.8%), and the rate for those who are 15-17 years old (18.9%). The RI Alliance's Strategic Plan for 2012 provides much data and information about the context of this problem.

Youth Responsibility and the Adolescent Self-Sufficiency Collaborative became the Youth Success Program

The Department has contracted since 4/1/09 with an association of nine (9) community-based organizations to provide an intervention program for at-risk and pregnant/parenting populations, called the Youth Success (YS) Program. All contracted organizations have either their own educational (GED) program or access to each others' programs, should a teen not remain in high school, which is the primary educational goal. Academic instruction leads to a high school diploma or its equivalent, pregnancy prevention education, skills development, service learning, and career exploration/work experience. The Youth Success program provides case management services, ensures health and dental care needs are met, improves teen character development and increases life skills, especially academic and parenting skills. Substance abuse services, domestic abuse/trauma services, mental health services and coordination with the Office of Child Support Services are all present in-house in these nine member agencies. The Family Needs Assessment used by YS is in compliance with the ACF's Teen Parent Responsibility Plan. As partner agencies may also operate Early Head Start, Head Start and licensed child care centers, participating youth receive priority for Head Start and child care services when appropriate. Further, as three of these agencies are regional leads in the Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP) operated by RI's Department of Children, Youth and Families, outreach is coordinated with the FCCP to reduce instances of teen pregnancy. An example of this Department's partnership with the FCCP and with the Department of Health is the joint effort to add resources to the newly funded Nurse-Family Partnership Program. Using strategies scientifically proven effective to reduce initial and repeat pregnancy, the YS works with teens, individually or in groups, in schools, in community sites, and/or in the teens' own homes. The YS also tracks, monitors, and reports to DHS each pregnant and parenting teen's school attendance, and works to resolve issues of non-compliance with DHS requirements, such as attending school.

Minor parents are required to live at home with their parents, with a relative, or a legal guardian in order to be eligible for cash assistance through the R.I. Works Program. Unless otherwise authorized, the cash assistance is issued to the parent, relative, or the legal guardian on behalf of the minor parent. When there is good cause for a minor parent to live outside the allowable living arrangements above, and there is no suitable relative or legal guardian, the minor parent must live in an adult-supervised supportive living arrangement which ensures regular adult supervision and which requires the minor parent to participate in secondary education and the Youth Success program. Youth may be placed at state-developed New Opportunity Homes, as appropriate.

New Opportunity Homes

New Opportunity Homes (NOH) are a key component of DHS's teen parent programs. The New Opportunity Homes are supervised living arrangements which offer an alternative option for pregnant and parenting minor R.I. Works Program applicants/recipients who are unable to

remain at home with their own parents or guardians. The two (2) New Opportunity Homes provide minor teens with a positive environment that is safe and nurturing. A multi-disciplinary team reviews prospective residents to determine the appropriateness of a NOH, using screening criteria and assessments to assure that minor teen's needs may be met by a NOH. Moreover, each resident is assigned a case manager. Together, the NOH and the case management agency offer each resident educational supports and opportunities to develop social and life skills, including parenting skills, necessary to become positive parents and self-sufficient, productive adults.

(vi) Conduct a program, designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men

Statutory Rape

Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan has recommended that "Rhode Island should clarify, communicate, enforce and strengthen existing statutory rape and child molestation laws." A collaborative effort has therefore developed between each ASSC, now Youth Success (YS), and the DHS funded Domestic Violence Prevention program which provides education and training on the problems of statutory rape and child molestation to state and local law enforcement officials, educators, and adolescent counselors, all of whom are required to notify the R.I. Department of Children, Youth and Families when sexual abuse of a child is suspected. Further, the YS Program has been expanded to outreach and enroll 100% pregnant and parenting teens and a minimum of 330 males and 300 females who are considered at-risk youth. The YS Program will outreach to fathers in an effort not only to establish paternity and child support, but to encourage them to maintain an emotional relationship with their child.

(B) SPECIAL PROVISIONS

(i) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to treat families moving into the State from another State differently than other families under the program, and if so, how the State intends to treat such families under the program.

The State of Rhode Island does not intend to treat families moving into the state differently than established residents.

(ii) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The R.I. Works Program has adopted the provisions in section 402 (b) of PRWORA with regard to legal non-citizens. This requirement to comply with PRWORA will remain in effect according to all applicable changes made to the federal law, as that Act may hereafter be amended. Legal non-citizens must meet income and resource criteria including their sponsor's income and

resources. Such individuals will be eligible for cash assistance at the same levels and under the same rules as citizens. In order to be eligible, the non-citizen must be:

- A qualified non-citizen who entered the U.S. prior to 8/22/96; or
- A qualified non-citizen who entered the country on or after 8/22/96 and is exempt from the five (5) year ban as defined below; or
- After the five (5) year ban, a qualified non-citizen who entered the U.S. on or after 8/22/96.

Qualified non-citizens who are exempt from the five (5) year ban include:

- Refugees, under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);
- Asylees, under section 208 of the INA;
- Amerasian entrants as defined under section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1988;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants under section 501 (e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980;
- Lawfully residing honorably-discharged veterans (except one discharged for reasons of immigration status), and the unremarried widow or widower of the veteran;
- Non-citizens on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, their lawfully residing spouses and unmarried dependent children;
- Battered victims with a petition pending under 204 (a) (1) (A) or (B), or 244 (a) (3) of the INA; or
- Victims of human trafficking in accordance with section 107 (b) of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000.

Qualified non-citizens who entered the U.S. on or after 8/22/96, who are subject to the five (5) year ban include:

- Lawful permanent residents (LPR)
- Parolees for at least one (1) year under 212 (d) (5) of the INA
- Conditional entrants under 203 (a) (7) of immigration law in effect before 4/1/80
- Certain American Indians born outside the U.S.

A person who is not a United States citizen and does not meet the alienage requirements established in PRWORA, as amended, is not eligible for cash assistance. Those applicants who are ineligible include undocumented and/or illegal immigrants and persons documented as temporary visitors.

(iii) The document shall set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the State will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process.

Rhode Island provides an objective process for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility, for fair and equitable treatment, and for complaints and an appeals process for those recipients that have been adversely affected. Specific details pertaining to the policy and procedures are contained in Rhode Island DHS Manual Sections Civil Rights Compliance and Complaints and Hearings.

Furthermore, a parent or caretaker who requests assistance for a child shall meet with an agency representative as soon as possible and no later than five (5) days from the date of request for assistance. The application for assistance shall be accepted or denied by the Department no later than thirty (30) days following the date of application.

A family found by the Department to meet the eligibility criteria shall be entitled to receive cash assistance from the date of submitting a signed application. The family members shall be eligible for cash assistance for so long as they continue to meet the eligibility criteria and parents shall be eligible so long as they meet the terms and conditions of the work requirements.

Any applicant or recipient aggrieved because of a decision by the Department, including but not limited to, a decision regarding eligibility for benefits, the amount of benefits, terms of an Employment Plan or a delay in making a decision with respect to an application for assistance shall be entitled to an appeal. The Department shall provide an applicant with written notice of a decision to deny benefits and shall provide recipients written notice at least ten (10) days in advance of a decision to terminate or reduce benefits to the family. Notices shall be in easy to understand language and shall explain the reason for the Department's decision and cite the relevant section of the Department's regulations. The family may appeal the decision by filing a written request with the Department within thirty (30) days of the date the notice was mailed. If the recipient files the request within ten (10) days of the date the notice was mailed, the recipient may receive benefits without reduction pending the outcome of the appeal. Hearings with respect to public assistance shall be conducted by the Department.

(iv) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (I) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or (II) in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 added a provision to the Social Security Act requiring each state to indicate its intention to assist individuals in training for, seeking and maintaining employment in the eldercare workforce. Rhode Island notes its status as one of the

most elder-populated states (proportionately) in the country, and has been proactive historically in ensuring our TANF recipients are prepared to work effectively in this field which serves 14.4% of the state's population (2010 census). The current national average is that the elderly represent 12.9% of the US population, and this proportion will increase both nationally and in Rhode Island, per the Administration on Aging. It is predicted that, in 2030, elderly persons will be 19.7% of the national population, and 21.4% of Rhode Island's population.

Vocational trainings, which the Department supports for TANF recipients who choose them, in the areas of Healthcare Exploration, Homemaker, Certified Nursing Assistant and Medical Assistant are provided by eight separate agencies in Rhode Island. Of those eight agencies, seven already incorporate much material devoted to preparation for work with the elderly, and the eighth will have developed and begun delivering elder-centric training by 7/1/2012.

PART II

STATE PLAN CERTIFICATIONS:

The State of Rhode Island will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; to end dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

This program is known as the Rhode Island Works Program.

The Chief Executive Officer of the State of Rhode Island is Governor Gina Raimondo

1. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The State is currently operating during this and subsequent fiscal years a child support enforcement program described in the State plan under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

2. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A FOSTER CHILD AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The State is currently operating, and will continue to operate during this and subsequent fiscal years, a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State plan approved under part E. The State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State plan under Title XIX.

3. CERTIFICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Department of Human Services will administer and supervise Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with minor children under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, in all political subdivisions of the State.

The State of Rhode Island assures that local governments and private sector organizations:

- (a) Have been and will continue to be consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations.
- (b) Will have had at least forty-five (45) days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services.

4. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INDIANS WITH EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, the chief executive officer of the State of Rhode Island certifies that, during the fiscal year, the State will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

5. CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE

The State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage in accordance with RIGL 36-14-5.

6. OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT THE STATE WILL SCREEN FOR AND IDENTIFY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The State of Rhode Island has adopted the Domestic Violence option.

- 1) A. The State has established and enforced standards and procedures to:

Screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;

Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and

Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, and child support cooperation requirements in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

- B. Domestic violence defined:

For purposes of this paragraph, the term "domestic violence" has the same meaning as the term "battered or subjected to extreme cruelty", as defined in PRWORA section 408(a)(7)(C)(iii).

7. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THE STATE PLAN SUMMARY

Rhode Island will make available to the public a summary of any plan submitted by the State under this section.

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MANUAL
RHODE ISLAND WORKS PROGRAM**STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE**

1.

Payment to eligible families is made semi-monthly. The conversion of monthly dollar amounts to semi-monthly payment amounts is done automatically by INRHODES.

AMOUNT	PLAN SIZE	CASH ASSISTANCE MONTHLY STANDARD	CASH ASSISTANCE SEMI-MONTHLY
	1	\$ 327.00	\$ 163.50
	2	449.00	224.50
	3	554.00	277.00
	4	634.00	317.00
	5	714.00	357.00
	6	794.00	397.00
	7	874.00	437.00
	8	954.00	477.00
	9	1,034.00	517.00
	10	1,114.00	557.00
	11	1,194.00	597.00
	12	1,274.00	637.00
	13	1,354.00	677.00
	14	1,434.00	717.00
	15	1,514.00	757.00
	Add for each person over 15:	\$80.00	40.00

Unemployment Insurance Program Elements

In addition to the services and information provided to clients as described in the Operational Elements Section of this plan, the Unemployment Insurance Program will also submit to the U.S. Department of Labor the State Quality Service Plan and Corrective Action Plans with the WIOA state plan. These documents will be used for internal planning purposes among programs, but will not be published with the state plan due to the sensitive information they contain.

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program Elements

Rhode Island is one of six states that have a unified correctional system; all offenders in the state are under the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Correction's (RIDOC) and all prison facilities for both men and women are located on one complex. This complex is also the home to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, Hospitals and Human Services, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Office of Rehabilitative Services. These unique characteristics enhance the RIDOC's ability to effectively partner with state and local agencies engaged in the state's prisoner reentry efforts. While at the time of the submission of this plan RI did not have REO funded services, the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board (PCWDB), in collaboration with the Greater Rhode Island Workforce Development Board, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and RIDOC, submitted an application for the USDOL 2016 Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release AJC (LEAP 2). This effort is a reflection of the state's ability to collaborate, cooperate, and accommodate efforts that strive to make it possible for ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate back into their communities upon release from prison. Accordingly, the RIDOC reports that in 2015, at 3-years post release, 49% of offenders returned to the RIDOC with a new sentence, a significant drop from the 2004 54% 3-year return rate.

Jobs For Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program Elements

The Jobs for Veterans' State Grants (JVSG) is a five-year (FY 2015-2019), to assist veterans and eligible persons with their employment and training needs. In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(b)(5) and § 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) makes grant funds available for use in each State to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff. As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c) (2) requires States to submit an application for a grant that contains a State Plan narrative, which includes

- Discuss how the State intends to provide employment, training and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG.

NetworkRI Career Centers offers specialized services to eligible veterans and/or persons under the Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program. Each NetworkRI Career Center has a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) to render intensive services to eligible veterans and/or persons with one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE), identified by the Secretary of Labor. DVOP Specialists will conduct a comprehensive assessment of education, skills, and abilities of each referred veteran. This will include the development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that identifies employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate services that will enable the veterans to meet their employment goals.

If training has been identified in the Individual Employment Plan DVOP Specialist will make an appropriate referral to a suitable training programs including but not limited to the following;

1. Occupational skills training
2. On-the-Job training
3. Job readiness training
4. Adult Education and Literacy
5. Employer Customized training

In addition, DVOPs will continue to provide intensive service, in combination with follow-up activities. DVOP specialists will continue to monitor veteran's progress throughout training.

When a veteran is determined job ready and/or completes training, DVOP Specialist will collaborate with Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) and the Business Service Unit (BSU), and AJC staff for information about veteran employment opportunities. JVSG Staff will be able to provide all veterans and/or eligible persons with sufficient opportunities for job placement through the following services;

1. Referrals to federal job opportunities
2. Training of "veteran-only" electronic employment resources
3. Referrals to employers who are interested in hiring veterans
4. Referrals to local federal contractors
5. Facilitating networking workshops that promote the benefits of hiring veterans; and
6. Promoting job fairs for veterans

LVER staff will conduct follow-up activities with employers to ensure veterans and/or eligible persons are successful throughout the hiring process.

- The duties assigned to DVOP specialists and LVER staff by the State; specifically implementing DVOP and LVER duties or roles and responsibilities as outlined in 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and 4104. These duties must be consistent with current guidance;

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists

As an integral part of the State's Labor Exchange System the DVOP staff's primary focus is to meet the needs of veterans and eligible persons that have one or more (SBE). As per outlined, under 38 U.S.C. 4103 (a), DVOP Specialist will provide intensive services and facilitates placements to meet the employment needs of veterans, prioritizing service to special disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, and other categories of veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the Secretary of Labor.

DVOP staff will only service veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE), and other veterans as defined by the Secretary of Labor. Veterans requiring intensive services will be

assigned to a DVOP Specialist after receiving an initial intake assessment conducted by the identified AJC staff member.

The DVOP Specialist will conduct a comprehensive assessment of education, skills, and abilities of each referred veteran. This will include the development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that identifies employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate services that will enable the veteran to meet his or her employment goals. All activities, services and case notes and appropriate data are entered by the DVOP Specialist into the state's case management information system and virtual one-stop for monitoring and reporting purposes.

In order to maximize services to those eligible veterans and eligible persons, DVOP staff conducts outreach activities at a variety of sites including, but not limited to:

1. Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs
2. Homeless veterans retention project grantees
3. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Vets Center
4. Homeless shelters
5. Community Stand Down Events
6. State vocational rehabilitation agencies

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER)

As an integral part of the state labor exchange system the LVER staff will focus on the primary role, employer outreach on behalf of the job ready veterans as per outlined in 38 U.S.C 4104 (b)

The principal duties of a LVER are:

- Conduct outreach to employers in the area to assist veterans in gaining employment, including conducting seminars for employers and, in conjunction with employers, conducting job search workshops and establishing job search groups; and
- Facilitate employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in a State under the applicable State employment service delivery systems.

In the effort to promote the hiring and retention of eligible veterans and eligible persons the LVER staff will establish a rapport and follow-up with each employer by making weekly employer site visits with Business Service Representatives. This rapport and follow-up will allow the LVER to remind the employers of the benefit of hiring veterans. LVER staff will continue with the relationship building to act in response to the employer's needs in response to any objectives to retain better employees. LVER staff coordinates with the Business Service Representatives, as a part of the AJC system, on all the job fair and recruitment events. LVER staff will promote job development and provide information on the access to federal tax credit opportunities for employers that hire qualified veterans.

- Discuss the manner in which DVOP specialists and LVER staff are integrated into the State's employment service delivery system or one-stop delivery system partner network;

The integration of DVOP staff in each AJC connects the veteran to all programs and services the AJC has to offer. This may include partner programs such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or the State Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and/or ongoing activities including job recruitments, workshops, computer classes and job fairs.

DVOP staff are fully integrated into the AJC, and are required to actively participate in all AJC activities so their customers can take a full advantage of all available employment and training services. Staff meetings and training sessions amongst AJC partner programs and agencies such as WIOA, Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA), Rapid Response, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), and Employment services to partner programs including ORS, and RI Department of Elderly Affairs (DEA), Department of Human Services (DHS), are critical to the professional development of the DVOP staff. Their participation in these partner staff meetings broaden their knowledge of programs and resources, thus improving their capacity to effectively serve their customer base.

Veteran customers benefit from the team approach to service delivery and internal networking among staff. On behalf of their customers, staff are dedicated to the veterans program working closely with partner staff whose expertise varies from WIOA, TAA, Rapid Response, RESEA, and Employer Services to partner programs including ORS, DEA, and DHS. Outreach activities will ensure that the veterans' community is aware of the services provided by the DVOP staff as well as the AJC. To help veterans access and connect to AJC partner programs, resources and service outreach activities are conducted at the following locations:

1. Veteran community care center at the VA Regional Hospital;
2. Homeless veterans projects at the Rhode Island Veterans Home;
3. Vocation Rehabilitation and Education (VR&E) unit at the VA Regional Office;
4. TAP seminars and follow-up activities at the Newport Naval Base;
5. National Guard demobilization events; and
6. Yellow Ribbon Events.

Rhode Island employs a Coordinator of Employment & Training Programs to oversee the implementation and delivery of veteran services in the state. This individual will be responsible for the assessment and monitoring of all services provided to veteran customers; ensuring compliance with federal Veterans Priority of Service requirements, coordination of services among partners, and the effective utilization of employment and training services. The success of this plan will be monitored and assessed by the review of case notes, system weekly reports, and quarterly reports made available via the State's EmployRI database. The LVER staff are integrated into the Business Service Unit and participate in monthly meetings to review and update current employer outreach strategies. These employer outreach reviews are to ensure that veteran and eligible spouses are integrated into service delivery strategies.

- Discuss The Incentive Award program implemented using the 1% grant allocation set aside for this purpose, as applicable;

The Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training is not approved for Incentive Award Plans.

- Discuss the populations of veterans to be served, including any additional populations designated by the Secretary as eligible for services, and any additional populations specifically targeted by the State Workforce Agency for services from one-stop delivery system partners (e.g., Native American veterans; veterans in remote rural counties or parishes);

The eligible veteran population to be serviced under the JVSG program have been outlined in Veteran Program Letter (VPL) No. 03-14, VPL 03-14 Change 1 &2, VPL No. 04-14 and VPL No. 08-14. The targeted veteran population is as follows:

1. A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C 4211(1) and (3); Special disabled and disabled veteran are those:
 - a. Who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitle to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs; or,
 - b. Were discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability;
2. A homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. I 1302(a) and (b), as amended;
3. A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
4. An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
5. A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
6. A low-income individual (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36))
7. Transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive services;
8. Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units; and
9. The spouses or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members

DVOPs are able to outreach veterans with one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE). State strategies have also been developed to address veterans that do not qualify for federal homeless programs and/or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services. The state will target non-qualifying veterans and refer them to the local NetworkRI Career Centers for re-employment and training services offered by Wagner-Peyser and WIOA.

Rhode Island's veterans' population includes; incarcerated veterans who are served by the Department of Corrections along with the AJC and DVOP staff after the veteran is released from the Adult Correctional Institution (ACI), and Native American veterans who receive services in collaboration with AJC staff and the RI Indian Council in Providence. Through the collaboration

with the RI Indian Council Native American veterans with SBEs will be identified and outreached in an attempt to provide services by DVOP staff.

- Discuss how the State implements and monitors the administration of priority of service to covered persons;

As required by 38 U.S.C 4215 (b) and 20 CFR part 1001 and 1010, priority of service is provided to ensure that veterans and eligible persons receive consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify within the employment service delivery system and any sub-grantee funded in whole or in part by the US Department of Labor. Rhode Island's two local workforce development boards the Workforce Partner of Greater Rhode Island and the Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, include the priority of service requirements in their local plans. At the local level, AJC managers are responsible for ensuring that priority of service is effectively integrated throughout the activities and services of the center. Our AJC centers have intake forms/sign in sheets to identify veterans and eligible persons when they visit our service delivery points in person. Front desk staff are trained to inquire about veteran status, so if the customer identifies as a veteran or an eligible person, the individual is provided immediate priority. In addition, display signs are posted at the AJC point of entry that clearly describes priority of service an effort to encourage individuals to self-identify their veteran status. This information is also conveyed when veterans and eligible persons access service electronically. Our web-based EmployRI system includes content that explains priority of service, as well as provides veterans and eligible persons the opportunity to self-identify veteran status through virtual self-service registration.

If a veteran or an eligible persons, at a point of eligibility determination and enrollment, does not have the documentation verifying his or her eligibility for priority of service, he or she is afforded access on priority base to all services provided by program staff (including an intensive service) while awaiting verification. The only services that require priority verification on eligibility prior to the provision of services are those required for the commitment of outside resources, such a classroom training.

- Discuss how the State provides or intends to provide and measure, through both the DVOP and one-stop delivery system partner staff: (1) job and job training individualized career services, (2) employment placement services, and (3) job-driven training and subsequent placement service program for eligible veterans and eligible persons;

All eligible veterans and eligible persons referred to DVOP specialist will receive the following intensive services:

1. Comprehensive and Specialized Assessment
2. Individual Employment Plan
3. Group Career Counseling
4. Individual Career Counseling/Planning
5. Follow-up Activities

DVOP Specialist activities may include referrals to other agencies, supportive services, and/or career workshops to overcome employment barriers identified in the comprehensive assessment. Additional DVOP specialist and AJC staff activities include individual Job Search Planning, Résumé Preparation Assistance, and Labor Market Information for veterans and/or eligible persons.

Job development services will be facilitated by LVER staff and the Business Services Unit to coordinate veteran referrals to employers. All job postings within EmployRI will provide veterans and eligible persons a priority of service.

DVOP Specialist and AJC staff will refer veterans and eligible persons to applicable training programs based on training needs identified in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Veterans and eligible persons will be provided a priority of service on all considerate training program funded in whole or in part by U.S Department of Labor. JVSG and AJC performance goals will be measured through, ETA 9002 and Vets 200 reports to track the following categories:

1. Intensive Service Rate.
2. Enter Employment Rate (EER).
3. Employment Retention Rate (ERR).
4. Six Month Average Earnings (AE)

All reports are produced on a quarterly basis and are submitted to the State Directors of Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET) 45 days after close of quarter as outlined in VPL 01-15

- Discuss the hire date along with mandatory training completion dates for all DVOP specialists and LVER staff; and,

All newly hired JVSG staff must complete required training within two years of hire date per VPL 07-10. All specialized training will provided by National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI). DVOP staff must complete the following required courses; Facilitating Veteran Employment (FVE) and Intensive services (IS). LVER must complete the following required courses; Employer Outreach (EO) and Facilitating Veteran Employment (FVE). DVOP and LVER staff will receive additional training from NVTI upon; manager/staff request, availability of training openings and changes in JVSG program training requirements.

Name	Position	Date of Hire	Courses & Completion Dates
Jason T. Fafard	DVOP	09/08/2014	Facilitating Veteran Employment 12/05/2014 Intensive Services 12/12/2014
Roger P. Richards	DVOP	12/26/2012	Labor & Employment Specialist 05/11/2012 Basic Veteran Benefits On-line 01/07/2013 Case Management 02/01/2013

			<p>Promoting Partnerships for Employment 06/07/2013</p> <p>Intensive Services 07/18/2014</p>
Brenda P Tetreault	DVOP	07/10/2005	<p>Transition Assistance Program 03/03/2006</p> <p>Case Management 06/23/2006</p> <p>Basic Veteran Benefits On-line 02/26/2007</p> <p>Labor & Employment Specialist 12/17/2010</p> <p>Promoting Partnerships for Employment 03/18/2011</p> <p>Intensive Services 04/03/2015</p>
Jeremy B Tolleson	DVOP	01/26/2014	<p>Labor & Employment Specialist 04/11/2014</p> <p>Intensive Services 06/13/2014</p> <p>Facilitating Veteran Employment 08/01/2014</p>
Joaquin J. Andrade	LVER	11/20/2010	<p>Labor & Employment Specialist 03/11/2011</p> <p>Case Management 06/21/2011</p> <p>Basic Veteran Benefits On-line 03/16/2012</p> <p>Promoting Partnerships for Employment 05/04/2012</p> <p>Employer Outreach 06/13/2014</p> <p>Facilitating Veteran Employment 07/25/2014</p>

Timothy M. McGorty	DVOP	10/04/2014	Intensive Services 04/03/2015
	LVER	12/27/2015	Facilitating Veteran Employment 10/23/2015
			Employer Outreach (Attained By) (12/27/2017)

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) Program Elements

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training’s (DLT) Workforce Development Services (WDS) Division has contracted with SER Jobs for Progress (SER) via a Request for Proposal (RFP) and SER has demonstrated the ability to place older individuals into meaningful community service assignments. In addition, the agency has been successful in achieving the required thirty six percent entered employment rate for unsubsidized employment. We are always striving to increase our placement rates. DLT has contracted with SER for forty eight (48) slots. SER has in place designated Title V program staff members who oversee the program. They are responsible for training staff, recruiting enrollees, recruiting host sites, and locating employers. SER also assists in core and intensive training activities to enable enrollees to become job ready. They partner with the One-Stops and clients are co-enrolled.

I. Economic Projections and Impact:

- Long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the state that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d).)

Rhode Island employment is expected to increase by more than 51,000 jobs during the 2012-2022 projection period as the state’s economy continues to recover from recessionary losses. Employment in 2022 is projected to reach 545,550 an increase of 51,420 (10.4%) job from the 2012 employment level. Much of this growth is attributed to the increased demand for the products and services provided by the Health Care & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Administrative & Waste Services; Construction and Manufacturing sectors. Nationally employment is projected to increase by 10.8 percent.

Rhode Island Industry Projections by Economic Sector				
2012 - 2022				
	2012	2022		
	Projected	Projected	Numeric	Percent
	Employment	Employment	Change	Change
Statewide	494,130	545,550	51,420	10.4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	716	779	63	8.8
Mining	188	226	38	20.2
Utilities	1,055	1,000	-55	-5.2

Construction	16,002	20,250	4,248	26.6
Manufacturing	39,623	43,685	4,062	10.3
Wholesale Trade	16,843	17,100	257	1.5
Retail Trade	46,905	50,585	3,680	7.9
Transportation and Warehousing	9,780	11,015	1,235	12.6
Information	9,566	9,365	-201	-2.1
Finance and Insurance	23,310	24,950	1,640	7
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5,782	6,420	638	11
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	21,472	26,000	4,528	21.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	10,513	13,200	2,687	25.6
Administrative & Waste Services	24,102	28,600	4,498	18.7
Educational Services	44,178	45,600	1,422	3.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	80,648	94,500	13,852	17.2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7,618	9,130	1,512	19.9
Accommodation and Food Services	44,131	49,550	5,419	12.3
Other Services (except Government)	17,370	18,200	830	4.8
Government	31,989	31,030	-959	-3
Self Employed & Unpaid Family Workers	42,300	44,325	2,025	4.8

Occupational Outlook

Rhode Island employment in 2022 is projected to reach 545,550 an increase of 51,420 (10.4%) from our 2012 employment. Much of this growth is attributed to the increased demand for the products and services provided by the Health Care & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Administrative & Waste Services; Construction and Manufacturing sectors. Job openings result from the need to replace workers who leave an occupation and the need to fill vacancies created by business expansion. During the 2012-2022 projection period, it is estimated that employers will need to find workers to fill nearly 170,000 job openings. Nearly one-third of the job openings are attributed to the economic growth expected to occur during the projection period while over two-thirds of the jobs openings are due to replacement needs resulting from employee turnover. Several occupational groups are expected to grow at above average (10.4%) rates. Among the fastest growing occupational groups are Construction & Extraction (20.9%), Healthcare Support (20.4%), Personal Care & Service (18.2%), Computer & Mathematical (16.7%), and Business & Financial Operations (14.5%). These occupational groups are expected to generate over 17,000 new jobs during the projection period.

Occupational declines result from decreasing industry employment and from technological modifications. While all occupational groups are projected to have job gains: Protective Service (2.1%); Farming, Fishing, & Forestry (2.5%); Education, Training, & Library (4.5%); and Office & Administrative Support (5.8%) occupations are projected to grow at much slower rates. It is important to note that while job gains are below average, there will still be a demand for over 33,000 workers in these occupational groups resulting from new jobs and the need to replace workers who leave their jobs.

	Employment		Net Change	Percent Change	Openings Due To	
	2012	2022			Replacement	Growth
Total Occupations	494,130	545,550	51,420	10.41	115,950	53,798
Management Occupations	24,287	26,930	2,643	10.88	4,958	2,685
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	23,640	27,075	3,435	14.53	4,817	3,505
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	12,754	14,888	2,134	16.73	2,114	2,140
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	7,560	8,326	766	10.13	1,767	801
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	3,645	4,019	374	10.26	999	380
Community and Social Service Occupations	9,942	11,247	1,305	13.13	2,308	1,314
Legal Occupations	3,965	4,382	417	10.52	639	417
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	31,806	33,234	1,428	4.49	6,550	1,455
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	8,466	9,022	556	6.57	1,964	614
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	36,275	40,886	4,611	12.71	7,456	4,662
Healthcare Support Occupations	19,971	24,044	4,073	20.39	3,793	4,087
Protective Service Occupations	10,788	11,014	226	2.09	3,081	439
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	46,098	51,928	5,830	12.65	18,120	5,830
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	18,212	20,245	2,033	11.16	3,796	2,036
Personal Care and Service Occupations	18,846	22,271	3,425	18.17	3,850	3,436
Sales and Related Occupations	50,222	53,319	3,097	6.17	15,040	3,271
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	76,016	80,393	4,377	5.76	16,125	5,338
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	590	605	15	2.54	163	29
Construction and Extraction Occupations	19,420	23,488	4,068	20.95	3,047	4,082
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	16,943	18,413	1,470	8.68	3,918	1,521
Production Occupations	30,927	33,576	2,649	8.57	5,986	3,239
Transportation and Material Moving	23,757	26,245	2,488	10.47	5,459	2,517

High Demand Occupations

The top fifty occupations with the greatest number of total openings represent numerous opportunities for finding employment in the years ahead. It is projected that during the 2012-2022 projection period, employers will need to fill nearly 170,000 jobs resulting from employee turnover and economic growth. These occupations will account for more than half of all job openings projected for Rhode Island.

Rhode Island High Demand Occupations by Annual Openings

2012-2022

Retail Salespersons	683	First-Line Supervisors: Retail Sales Workers	144
Waiters & Waitresses	535	Bartenders	133
Combined Food Prep & Serving Workers	527	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	129
Cashiers	519	Dining Room & Bartender Helpers	128
Registered Nurses	413	Hosts & Hostesses	125
Nursing Assistants	388	Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	125
Customer Service Representatives	327	Secondary School Teachers	123
Counter Attendants: Cafeteria & Coffee Shop	231	Receptionists & Information Clerks	118
Office Clerks, General	223	Management Analysts	117
Janitors & Cleaners	216	Teacher Assistants	117
Laborers:Freight, Stock, & Movers (Hand)	208	Team Assemblers	115
First-Line Supervisors: Office & Administrative Support Workers	197	Social & Human Service Assistants	110
Home Health Aides	196	Sales Representatives: (Wholesale & Manufacturing)	110
Personal Care Aides	194	Medical Secretaries	105
Landscaping & Grounds keeping Workers	188	Construction Laborers	101
General & Operations Managers	176	Elementary School Teachers	98
Childcare Workers	171	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	93
Dishwashers	168	Packers & Packagers, Hand	91
Accountants & Auditors	166	Tellers	91
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	164	Financial Managers	88
Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	160	Food Preparation Workers	86
First-Line Supervisors: Food Preparation & Serving Workers	152	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists	86
Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	151	Electricians	80
Cooks, Restaurant	149	Software Developers, Systems Software	79
Carpenters	147	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	78

- Provide a discussion of how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which

SCSEP participants will be trained and the types of skill training to be provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d).)

The Rhode Island SCSEP program is concerned for the participants in the SCSEP program. According to the Rhode Island DLT’s Labor Market Information (LMI) Unit, the following industries are projected to rank among the fastest growing from 2012 to 2022: Construction & Extraction (20.9%), Healthcare Support (20.4%), Personal Care & Service (18.2%), Computer & Mathematical (16.7%), and Business & Financial Operations (14.5%). These industries are not the common job skill training for SCSEP participants. The RI SCSEP participants lack the education and experience to apply for these positions. However, the SCSEP participants can be trained for the “supportive services” to these industries. Past trainings and Job placements have included positions such as Food Preparation and Service; Education, Training, and Library Services; Office and Administrative Support; Retail, Sales, and Related Services; Maintenance and Custodial Services; Personal Care and Service; Production, Assembly, Light Industrial; Protective Service; Transportation and Material Moving; Community and Social Services; Management; Healthcare; and Legal Services. This strategy has proven successful and will continue to be followed.

- Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the state (such as by providing information available under W-P Section 15 (29 USC 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c))

Employment in Rhode Island is projected to grow at all education and skill levels, from jobs requiring less than a high school diploma to those requiring advanced degrees. During the 2012-2022 projection period, it is estimated that employers will need to find workers to fill over 170,000 new jobs and to replace more than 115,000 workers who will leave their jobs for various reasons. Parallel to the national distribution, jobs requiring a high school diploma for entry into an occupation represent the largest portion of the Rhode Island labor market. Thirty four percent (34%) of Rhode Island jobs require the minimum of a high school education; slightly below the nation percent (43.4%) in this category. More than 57,000 openings are projected for occupations at this educational level. Thirty two percent are jobs due to growth in the economy with sixty eight percent due to replacement needs.

Jobs requiring college degrees (Associate, Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral) represent slightly less than a quarter of the current occupational distribution in Rhode Island.

Education Level	Annual Openings				
	2012	2022	Growth	Replacements	Total
Doctoral or professional degree	18,723	20,379	1,687	3,925	5,612
Master's degree	9,629	10,586	976	1,953	2,929
Bachelor's degree	87,835	97,587	9,913	18,328	28,241
Associate's degree	24,293	27,493	3,244	4,770	8,014
Postsecondary non-degree award	29,839	33,704	4,022	5,981	10,003
Some college, no degree	6,230	6,619	389	1,322	1,711
High school diploma or equivalent	190,318	206,604	18,180	39,470	57,650

Less than high school	127,263	142,578	15,387	40,201	55,588
Grand Total	494,130	545,550	53,798	115,950	169,748

Prior work experience in a previous occupation is required for fifteen percent of the occupations in our workforce. Ten percent of all occupations require from 1 to 5 years of work experience.

Work Experience	Annual Openings				
	2012	2022	Growth	Replacements	Total
5 years or more	13,893	15,457	1,584	2,594	4,178
Less than 5 years	50,969	56,176	5,375	10,638	16,013
None	429,268	473,917	46,839	102,718	149,557

Occupational distribution of the typical on-the-job training needed to attain competency for Rhode Island occupations.

Training Requirements	Annual Openings				
	2012	2022	Growth	Replacements	Total
Grand Total	494,130	545,550	53,798	115,950	169,748
Internship/residency	24,284	25,369	1,116	5,504	6,620
Apprenticeship	9,399	11,706	2,308	1,369	3,677
Long-term on-the-job training	23,120	24,736	1,914	5,201	7,115
Moderate-term on-the-job training	75,924	82,581	7,562	14,724	22,286
Short-term on-the-job training	192,352	211,559	20,051	54,102	74,153
None	169,051	189,599	20,847	35,050	55,897

National employer surveys also indicate the need for workers to have basic and “soft” skills now and in the future. For almost a decade, the National Association of Colleges and Employers has surveyed employers about their “most-wanted” skills. Transferable “soft skills” are those that are important to employers—regardless of the jobs pay or rank. The types of skills possessed by individuals eligible for and/or participating in the RI SCSEP are in line with the projected growth in employment opportunities in Rhode Island as well as the education and skill levels needed to fill those opportunities.

Service Delivery and Coordination

- Provide a description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs. This may alternatively be discussed in the state strategies section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:

- Additionally, discuss Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA Title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA One-Stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e).)

The RI DLT operates the One-Stop Delivery System, including the American Job Centers (AJC's). The RI DLT has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Greater Rhode Island Workforce Development Board and the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board. SCSEP information is shared with the AJC's, such as program eligibility requirements and priorities, open training slots, and workshop information. In addition, information is shared regarding the fastest growing industries, occupations and businesses that offer appropriate job opportunities for SCSEP participants. Also, SCSEP marketing materials, such as brochures and posters (including bilingual materials) are placed at the AJC's and updated and replenished during frequent visits. SCSEP staff and participants will continue to participate in Job Fairs at the AJC's. SCSEP participants assigned to the One-Stops as Older Worker Specialists will help older Rhode Islanders access job information and obtain other One-Stop services that may be available to enhance employability. In addition, they will cross flow job market and training information between the AJC's and the SCSEP program offices. And, the RI DLT staff will disseminate information regarding training vacancies and refer potential applicants to the SCSEP program sub-grantee; SER. Exiting participants will be encouraged to continue their association with the AJC's. In particular, participants who have reached their individual durational limit for SCSEP services - but who have not yet obtained unsubsidized employment - will be referred to the AJC's for further job search and training support.

- Discuss planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the state under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(h).

Rhode Island SCSEP collaborates with other Older Americans Act programs, such as the nutrition and adult day programs. These partnerships have led to the establishment of effective training assignments that provide much needed services to older Rhode Islanders. And, SCSEP participants have been hired by host training sites that provide OAA program services.

- Provide planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith-based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i)

The SCSEP program collaborates and leverages resources with many organizations to provide training and supportive services for the participants. Some of these entities include host training sites, educational organizations, veteran representatives, vocational rehabilitation activities, and social service agencies. In addition, RI SCSEP coordinates with many agencies to help participants in need of services such as subsidized housing or temporary shelters; no-cost medical and prescription programs; Catholic Charities; energy assistance; utility discounts; food stamps; Supplemental Security Income; reduced fares on transportation; the RI Food Bank; church-provided food and clothing; and, nutrition programs provided through the Older Americans Act. Also, the sub-grantees work to improve financial planning skills in collaboration with financial entities. For participants who will exit SCSEP without a job, referrals will be made to programs such as Foster Grandparents. Those exiting participants who wish to volunteer will

be referred to opportunities such as through the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, Big Brothers Big Sisters and other organizations who seek people to contribute on a voluntary basis.

- Provide Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))

RI SCSEP will maintain close liaison with the Department of Labor's AJC's to monitor job market trends and opportunities. Working relationships will be maintained with the One-Stops, including Disability Specialists from the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS) and Veteran Representatives. Also, SCSEP participants will continue to be assigned. Older Worker Specialists at the One-Stops to facilitate a cross flow of information and to provide services. Also, job market information such as the Occupation and Industry Projections information will be considered when making training decisions. And, the state's four AJC's will continue to be consulted as they provide daily support in the transition of SCSEP participants to jobs. For example, sub-grantees will visit the AJC's on a frequent basis to discuss new programs, workshops, and training that can be offered to SCSEP participants.

- Discuss the actions to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the One-Stop delivery system and the steps the state will take to encourage and improve coordination with One-Stop delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335.)

RI SCSEP will continue its collaboration with the One-Stop system, including the AJC's and the Greater Rhode Island Workforce Development Board and Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board. SCSEP program managers and staff visit the AJC's on a frequent basis to discuss and review the progress of the partnership and to learn about any new programs, workshops or training that may be available to Participants. In addition, the sub-grantee works closely with the staff assigned to the AJC's to secure services for appropriate Program participants. SCSEP marketing materials, such as brochures and posters (including bilingual materials) are placed at the Centers and updated and replenished during visits. SCSEP participants who are training as Older Worker Specialists at the AJC's will continue to provide guidance on how to access job information, write resumes, and access other services that may be available to help secure employment. Also, valuable information is shared with the AJC's, such as eligibility requirements and priorities; available jobs and open training assignments; and, workshop information. Access to intensive and training services will continue to be considered with the above collaborative actions. However, One-Stop Center training funds are used primarily for Rhode Islanders seeking full time work; and, most SCSEP participants are interested in part-time employment. As partners under the WIOA, a Memorandum of Understanding for the Program will be updated with the sub grantee when appropriate.

- Discuss efforts the State will make to work with local economic development offices in rural locations

Rhode Island does not have a strategy to work with local economic development offices in rural location. According to the SCSEP final rule where rural is defined as "areas not designated as a metropolitan statistical area by the Census Bureau; segments within metropolitan counties identified by codes 4 through 10 in the Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) system; and RUCA codes 2 and 3 for census tracts that are larger than 400 square miles and have populations

density of less than 30 people per square mile”, there do not exist any communities that are considered rural communities.

- Discuss the state’s long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e).) (May alternatively be discussed in the state strategies section of the strategic plan.)

RI SCSEP will continue to emphasize actions that transition participants to successful unsubsidized employment. A significant portion of that effort goes towards strengthening working relationships with the organizations that hire SCSEP participants and in establishing new relationships with potential employers. The Program develops job leads and identifies potential employers in the public and private sectors by advertising, attending job fairs, responding to ads in local newspapers, and contacting employers (in person, by telephone, and by letter). The Program will continue to use the Internet to access various job search sites in an effort to identify job opportunities for SCSEP participants.

The SCSEP partnership with the AJC’s will continue to be maintained and improved. For example, program participants are assigned to the One-Stops as Older Worker Specialists and facilitate a cross flow of information, such as job market trends and job openings. Also, the program managers and staff will routinely consult with the One-Stops. After each SCSEP participant has been transitioned to his or her unsubsidized job, follow ups will be accomplished with the successful person and his or her new workplace to facilitate long term employment.

The Program will maintain contact with the employers who have hired participants in the past to promote goodwill and future job prospects. Follow-up activities that are required by Program regulations, as well as more informal contacts, increase the probability of retention and of employers being receptive to SCSEP when additional jobs become available. Also, to foster good job retention and employer relations, emphasis will continue to be placed on sending qualified and suitable participants to each particular job interview. The typical SCSEP participant usually accepts only part-time employment with day time hours during the normal work week. Therefore, the program mostly targets community service organizations and small businesses, since these employers have more of the types of jobs that SCSEP participants are seeking. Also, because SCSEP participants do not normally accept relocations or extended commutes, the Program has primarily focused on the local, community job markets. A significant portion of the Program’s unsubsidized placements occur when the host training sites hire the SCSEP participants that are assigned to them. Program managers and staff will continue to routinely visit host training sites to encourage them to hire their assigned SCSEP participants when there are job openings and available funds. The value and benefits of hiring their SCSEP-trained participants will continue to be emphasized.

- Discuss the state’s long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302(c))

Historically, the majority of participants in RI SCSEP have been minority individuals. For example, the most recent U.S. DOL SCSEP minority report indicates that the state’s overall incidence of all minorities in the population was 24.4% while the SCSEP enrollment percentage is 49.2%. However, while the SCSEP enrollment of blacks was significantly higher than this

minority's incidence in the State (14.8% versus 6.6%), SCSEP's enrollment of Hispanics was about 203.3% of the incidence of this minority (e.g. 31.1% enrolled in SCSEP versus 15.3% residing statewide)¹⁹. RI SCSEP has emphasized and will continue to focus on minority enrollments. Specifically, organizations that are frequented by Hispanics are visited by the sub-grantees to provide outreach and recruit candidates for the program. Also, the program engages in job fairs and other events that are designed to make the Hispanic group inclusive. In addition, high quality flyers and literature in Spanish have been developed and distributed to reach this group. The sub-grantee has bilingual staff from time to time – which has proven to be very helpful for outreach, recruitment and participant support. The recruitment of bilingual staff, and participants that help administer SCSEP in the Program Offices and One-Stops, is on-going. And, the RI SCSEP enrollment levels for minorities in PY 2011 have been positive. For example, the percentage of minority enrollees through the second quarter of Program Year 2015 totaled 47%; and, the Hispanic enrollment level was 19%. RI SCSEP sub-grantee will continue to recruit the minority population in many ways, such as: (1) contacting community agencies, minority churches and organizations that serve multi-cultural populations; (2) assigning participants to host training sites which serve and communicate with the minority population; (3) inviting guest speakers from the minority community to participate in SCSEP workshops; (4) asking all participants, including minority individuals, to make program referrals for family, friends, and other contacts.

- Provide a list of community services that are needed and the places where these services are most needed. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location of those individuals most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330.)

The Program views the distribution of community service needs across the State as being in-line with the equitable distribution of program-eligible individuals.

1) Needs of Individuals:

Many SCSEP participants are in need of various supportive services. The needs of individuals will be met so they can fully benefit from SCSEP services and be in the best position to obtain and retain unsubsidized jobs. Sub-grantee staffs will provide job-related or personal counseling directly; or, by referral to community resources that are better qualified to deal with particular problems. When the need is job-related, the counseling may also include the Participant's training site supervisor. If the sub-grantee cannot satisfy a Participant's personal or social need, there will be access to a full array of services through information and referral networks and procedures. Services include legal assistance, health care agencies, educational opportunities, Social Security benefits; and, clothing, housing, home heating fuel and transportation assistance. In addition, incidentals necessary for training site assignments (e.g. safety glasses, work shoes, etc.) will be obtained by referral to social agencies that may provide them without charge. If unavailable at no cost through local resources, the sub-grantees may procure the needed items.

2) Community Services and Supportive Services:

The work of collecting, monitoring, and analyzing community service needs is an ongoing process. SCSEP's service to a community is based primarily on the social and economic needs of the participants entering the program; and, on the demand for services within local communities.

¹⁹ U.S. DOL Report on Senior Community Service Employment Program - Analysis of Service to Minority Individuals, Program Year 2013, Volume 11: Appendices, revised April 6, 2015.

The identification of potential training sites is accomplished through community outreach efforts, such as through meetings with current and potential host training sites, to determine where the greatest needs for SCSEP assignments exist. Efforts also include frequent coordination with the One-Stop Career Centers and Rhode Island's Division of Elderly Affairs to monitor community needs. RI SCSEP initiates and maintains partnerships with area non-profit agencies that provide a wide range of services, including: adult day programs, child day care, food services, recreational facilities, health care, and social services. The current focus is on community service needs being supported through the state's network of senior centers, state service centers, housing agencies, shelters, and child care facilities.

Efforts are ongoing to expand the reach of SCSEP throughout the State. For example, there is an ongoing effort to recruit additional community service training sites in RI to complement the existing sites. Existing sites include Boys and Girls Club; Channel One Ralph Holden Community Center; Comprehensive Community Action Inc; DaVinci Center; Federal Hill House; Fruit Hill Day Care; MET School; RI Donation Exchange; Senior Services, Inc.; St. Elizabeth Place; and St. Martin DePorres.

- Discuss the state's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned longer-term changes to the design of the program within the state, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR 641.302(k))

RI SCSEP has been successful for many years in providing work experience, supportive services and job search assistance to Older Workers and, in assigning productive trainees to community service agencies. The Program has helped Older Rhode Islanders become job-ready and to re-enter the workforce - while providing employers with trained individuals. There is one sub-grantee who serves three counties. The distribution of authorizations is based on the Equitable Distribution as provided by U.S. DOL, which identifies each County's percentage of the state's program-eligible population. The Program Year 2015 grant funds 48 authorizations across the state, according to the following allocations: Bristol County – 5 slots; Kent County – 10 slots; Providence County – 33 slots.

The sub-grantee has many years of experience in operating the SCSEP program; and has created well-established relationships with host training sites; employers; supportive service resources; and training providers. However, one strategic area that will continue to receive emphasis is Sub-grantee staff training. Significant changes to the Program during the past decade have placed greater emphasis on performance measures; and greater priority on enrolling those program-eligible individuals who are least marketable and who have the most barriers to employment. SCSEP personnel will need to continually increase expertise and knowledge to meet performance expectations; to effectively assist the targeted population in achieving long term employment; and to maximize the Program's contributions to community service. Such areas of expertise include job development; outreach and recruitment of partnerships, participants, training sites, and employers; counseling, case management and case note writing; participant files maintenance; and, market research and statistical analysis. Greater knowledge of the targeted population, such as the disabled, will also be needed to ensure continuous improvement. One recommendation is for U.S. DOL to place greater emphasis on arranging training that directly applies to effective SCSEP operations at the sub-grantee level (e.g. the staff training

described above). Another recommendation is for U.S. DOL to increase nationwide outreach so that employers become more aware of SCSEP and its job-ready participants.

- Outline the state's strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR 641.302(f).)

1) Targeting Jobs Effectively:

RI SCSEP has been most successful in placing its participants in unsubsidized employment with community service agencies -- especially with host training sites -- and in other service-oriented industries. The most prevalent occupations for SCSEP participants include jobs in maintenance and custodial work; as office clerks and receptionists; van drivers; child care workers; senior center program assistants; retail sales associates; housekeeping; food service; and, in customer service. The Program focuses on all areas of the state. However, many participants cannot - or prefer not to - have long commutes to and from work; so, all attempts will be made to identify and develop local job opportunities. Again, a significant portion of the Program's unsubsidized placements occur when community service training sites hire SCSEP participants that have been training at the sites. Therefore, program managers and staff will routinely visit host training sites and encourage them to hire their assigned SCSEP participants as funds becomes available. The value and benefits of hiring their trained participants will be emphasized. Also, the Program will require training sites to sign a Letter of Agreement that clearly describes the temporary nature of training assignments; and, which emphasizes the site's responsibility for considering qualified participants for jobs.

2) Working with the AJC's Effectively:

The Program will continue to partner with the AJC's to monitor information on job openings and trends that will help identify current and future regional job opportunities. Information will be tracked regarding the fastest growing industries and the occupations and businesses that offer appropriate job opportunities for SCSEP participants. Also, future coordination will increasingly emphasize workforce development in view of demographic, economic and job market changes. In addition, SCSEP participants training as Older Worker Specialists will continue to be assigned at the AJC's to assist older job seekers; and, to cross flow job market and training information with One-Stop Center personnel and SCSEP program managers and staff.

3) Managing Durational Limits Effectively:

The Program will continue to provide quality support to each participant who is approaching his or her SCSEP durational limit (e.g. not employed after 48 months in the program). The sub-grantees will continue to train on individual durational limit requirements; transitional planning and scheduling; conducting assessments; preparing and implementing transitional Individual Employment Plans; researching the local job market; and, on accessing all supportive services available to assist the SCSEP participants. When a participant receives an assessment 12 months before his or her durational limit date, a transitional IEP is developed and initiated. Also, a reassessment will be accomplished six months before the individual's durational limit date (or sooner, if needed); and, his or her transitional IEP will be updated during the reassessment. For individuals with good or reasonable job potential, transitional IEP actions may include polishing resumes and interviewing skills; enhancing job development and training efforts; and/or making rotations. In addition, to foster good employer relations during the transition process, emphasis

will be placed on sending qualified and suitable participants to each job interview.

4) Training Participants Effectively:

Participant training is a key ingredient for successful program performance. The following training activities are ongoing and will continue to be emphasized:

A). In addition to providing quality work experience, the host training sites will be encouraged to make formal in-service and on-the-job training available for their assigned SCSEP participants. The intent is not only to increase effectiveness in the current assignment, but also to further prepare participants for unsubsidized employment. Training will be consistent with each participant's assessment and Individual Employment Plan. Also, computer training and experience will continue to be emphasized and provided by the sub-grantee; host training sites; and, by training sources under agreement with the sub-grantee. In addition, SCSEP will continue to collaborate with the local libraries and non-provide agencies that offer free training.

B) Workshops will continue to be provided by the sub-grantee, covering different aspects of the job-seeking process and topics relating to health, consumer information, transportation, social security and retirement security. Workshops include speakers from community service organizations, government agencies, and the local business community. In addition, workshops will continue to be arranged for specific skills -- such as customer service.

C) Participants seeking full time employment - who would improve their potential for transition into unsubsidized employment with skills training - will be encouraged to attend programs offered through WIOA American Job Centers.

V. Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution:

- Provide a description of the localities and populations for which projects of the type authorized by Title V are most needed (20 CFR 641.325(d))

Rhode Island residents 55 and older (older residents) account for 28.1 percent of the state's population. Of the state's population for whom poverty status is determined, 14.2 percent are living in poverty (100% or below poverty level) and 18.5 percent are living in or near poverty levels (125% or below poverty level). Older residents are less likely to be living at or near poverty levels than the population as a whole as 9.6 percent of those aged 55+ for whom poverty status is determined are living in poverty and 13.6 percent are living in or near poverty levels. Providence County has the greatest number of older residents living in or near poverty levels on both a numeric and percentage basis. A total of 19,263 Providence County residents 55 or older are living in poverty accounting for 12.3 percent of the county's older population and 27,056 are living in or near poverty levels accounting for 17.3 percent of the county's older population. In Kent County a total of 3,556 older residents are living in poverty accounting for 7.1% of the county's older population and 5,191 older residents are living in or near poverty levels accounting for 10.4% percent of the county's older population.

In Bristol County a total of 879 older residents are living in poverty accounting for 5.8% percent of the county's older population and 1,382 are living in or near poverty levels accounting for 9.1% percent of the county's older population. Within Providence County seven cities and towns

have more than 1,000 older residents living in or near poverty levels, including Providence (8,435), Pawtucket (4,291), Cranston (2,922), East Providence (1,814), Woonsocket (2,415), North Providence (1,542) and Johnston (1,237). Warwick (2,675), Coventry (1,094) and West Warwick (1,092), located in Kent County, are the only other Rhode Island cities or towns with more than 1,000 older residents living in or near poverty levels. On a percentage basis, the cities of Central Falls (32.9%), Providence (27.7%), Pawtucket (24.9%) and Woonsocket (24.0%), all located in Providence County, have the greatest share of older residents living in or near poverty levels. Demographic data for all individuals living at the poverty level, which accounts for over three-quarters of all those living in or near poverty levels, shows that women, both older and total population, are more likely to be living in poverty than men of the same age group. Older women account for 63.9 percent of the older residents living at the poverty level, with older men accounting for 36.1 percent. Likewise, minority residents 55 and older are more likely to be living in poverty than the non-minority residents 55 and older, defined as a person whom is both white and non-Hispanic. There are 8,148 minority residents 55 and older living in poverty. They account for 24.4 percent of Rhode Island's older minority population (33,330). There are 21,611 non-minority residents 55 and older living in poverty. They account for 8.2 percent of Rhode Island's older non-minority population (262,029). However, older minority residents living in poverty numbering 8,148 account for 31.3 percent of the 26,043 older RI residents living in poverty and older non-minority residents numbering 21,611 account for 83 percent of the older RI residents living in poverty.

- Outline which cities and counties where the SCSEP project will take place.

In Rhode Island the SCSEP equitable distribution consists of five slots in Bristol County; ten slots in Kent County; and thirty-three (33) slots in Providence County. Cities located in Bristol County include Barrington, Bristol, and Warren. Cities located in Kent County include Coventry, East Greenwich, Warwick, West Greenwich, and West Warwick. Cities located in Providence County include Burrillville, Central Falls, Cranston, Cumberland, East Providence, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, Scituate, Smithfield, and Woonsocket. The SCSEP project will take place in each of these three counties and the cities or towns that comprise those counties.

- Discuss the state's slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.

As of Program Year 2015 Quarter 2, RI SCSEP equitable distribution data indicates that of the 48 authorized slots (unmodified) Kent County is under-enrolled by 2 slots; Bristol County is under-enrolled by 2 slots; and Providence County is under-enrolled by 4 slots. Rhode Island SCSEP has been actively pursuing new enrollees throughout all Counties using a multipronged approach. RI SCSEP strategy will include continued efforts to engage local businesses, churches, and agencies/centers that seniors may visit. We recognize the importance of maintaining equitable distribution among the counties we serve and will remain diligent and aggressive to more specifically target our recruitment efforts with this in mind. Modified slots for RI SCSEP are 37 in number, based on Rhode Island's minimum wage.

- Discuss The state's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the state that:

A) Moves positions from over-served to under-served locations within the state in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365.

RI SCSEP strives to provide equitable access to the program in accordance with the percentages of program-eligible residents' three counties. When there are changes to the ratios, authorizations will be redistributed among the three counties based on the new equitable distribution -- increasing positions where needed and decreasing training slots in over-served counties. However, current participants will not be impacted by any reallocations.

B) Equitably serves rural and urban areas

Bristol County, Kent County and Providence County are considered urban areas. Within those counties, and according to the SCSEP final rule where rural is defined as "areas not designated as a metropolitan statistical area by the Census Bureau; segments within metropolitan counties identified by codes 4 through 10 in the Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) system; and RUCA codes 2 and 3 for census tracts that are larger than 400 square miles and have populations density of less than 30 people per square mile", there do not exist any communities that are considered rural communities. Again, training authorizations will follow the equitable distribution percentage for each County.

C) Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520.)

In selecting eligible individuals for participation in the SCSEP, priority is given to individuals who have one or more of the following characteristics: Are 65 years of age or older; have a disability, have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills; Reside in a rural area; Are veterans (or, in some cases, spouses of veterans) for purposes of §2(a) of the Jobs for Veterans Act, 38 U.S.C. 4215(a) as set forth in paragraph (b) of this section; Have low employment prospects; Have failed to find employment after using services provided through the One-Stop delivery system; or Are homeless or are at risk for homelessness. (OAA §518(b)).

RI SCSEP applies these priorities in the following order: Persons who qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse under §2(a) of the Jobs for Veterans Act, 38 U.S.C. 4215(a), and who possess at least one of the other priority characteristics; Persons who qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse under §2(a) of the Jobs for Veterans Act, 38 U.S.C. 4215(a), who do not possess any other of the priority characteristics; and Persons who do not qualify as a veteran or qualified spouse under §2(a) of the Jobs for Veterans Act (non-veterans), and who possess at least one of the other priority characteristics.

To assist employment counselors in prioritizing participants with significant barriers to employment, SER utilizes a multifaceted approach to reach the hardest to serve. SER assesses and reassesses participants via a face to face interview, facilitated by the case manager. The assessment covers previous employment history and transferable skills; strengths and barriers; interests and hobbies; educational level; and previous training. SER also utilizes a variety of contacts to recruit those individuals and these contacts include Senior Centers; Churches and Faith Based Organizations; Homeless Shelters; Veteran's Organizations; Community Food Banks. Within all enrollment priorities those with poor employment prospects are given preference. These are individuals who are unable to obtain employment without the assistance of

SCSEP or other employment and training programs. Those included in this category are individuals who have limited or no work histories; are basic skills deficient; have limited English language proficiency; are displaced homemakers; are disabled; are homeless. The Program views the distribution of priority individuals across the State as being in line with the equitable distribution of program-eligible individuals across the three counties.

E) Provides the ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the state. (20 CFR 641.325(a))

RI has one SCSEP Grantee and one Sub-grantee who each serves three Counties per the SCSEP equitable distribution as provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, which identifies each county's percentage of the state's program-eligible population. In 2014, out of a Rhode Island civilian labor force of 565,123 (those aged 16 and older) who were either working or actively seeking employment, 21.7%, or 122,783, were aged 55 and older. 97.2% of Rhode Islanders aged 55 and older have had their poverty levels determined. Of those individuals, 9.6% are below the poverty level.

F) The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:

1. Reside in urban and rural areas within the state.

US Census Bureau estimates a 2014 total population for the State of RI at 1,053,252. Of Rhode Island's 862,851 working age (16+) residents, approximately 296,115 (34.3%) were aged 55 and older in 2014. Broken down by county, the 16+ populations (and corresponding distributions) of those over age 55 are as follows: Bristol County 40,776 (38.8%); Kent County 136,492 (37.5%); and, Providence County 510,822 (31.7%). This population distribution generally corresponds to the percentage of program-eligible Rhode Islanders in each county. Specifically, the three counties are allocated positions and funding based on the Equitable Distribution ratios that are in effect for each grant year (*as identified by the U.S. Department of Labor*). The ratios for the PY 2015 grant year are Bristol County 10%, Kent County 21%, and Providence County 69%.

2. Have the greatest economic need. *Greatest economic need* means the need resulting from an income level at or below the poverty guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). (42 U.S.C. 3002(23))

For those participants facing the greatest economic need RI SCSEP's partnership with local homeless shelters, food banks and other community agencies serving economically depressed mature individuals has led to the SCSEP program being able to serve the majority of participants who are at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level at the time of enrollment. Greatest social need and individuals described in "priority of service". The RI SCSEP reaches out to local minority communities through churches, schools and community networking to provide services to and engagement of disparate groups in all local service areas resulting in a consistently "meets or exceeds the performance" on the most-in-need measure.

3. Are minorities

In RI, SER employees reflect the minority communities having a cultural understanding of minority perspectives, concerns, and needs. Minority residents 55 and older are more likely to be

living in poverty than the non-minority residents 55 or older, minority being defined as not white non-Hispanic. There are 8,148 minority residents 55 and older living in poverty. They account for 24.4 percent of Rhode Island's older minority population (33,330) for whom poverty status has been determined.

There are 21,611 non-minority residents 55 and older living in poverty. They account for 8.2 percent of Rhode Island's older non-minority population (262,029) for whom poverty status has been determined. However, older minority residents numbering 8,148 account for 24.4 percent of the 33,330 older RI residents living in poverty and older non-minority residents numbering 19,419 account for 75.6 percent of the older RI residents living in poverty. RI SCSEP active participants are comprised of 47% minorities which is nearly double the ratio of minority versus non-minorities in RI.

4. Are limited English proficient

The 2013 Community Service Survey reported that 28.6% of the foreign born population aged 5+ in RI spoke English "not well" or "not at all" in the home. RI SCSEP currently serves 17% limited English proficient participants and has consistently met that need for eligible SCSEP participants in RI.

5. Have the greatest social need (20 CFR 641.325(b).)

Greatest social need means the need caused by non-economic factors, which include: Physical and mental disabilities; language barriers; and cultural, social, or geographical isolation, including isolation caused by racial or ethnic status, which restricts the ability of an individual to perform normal daily tasks or threatens the capacity of the individual to live independently. (42 U.S.C. 3002(24)). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of the 88,385 individuals aged 18-64 living below poverty, 25.8% have disabilities, while 74.2% do not. However, of the 77,086 individuals aged 18-64 with disabilities, 29.6% live below poverty, while 11.6% of the 566,336 18-64 years olds without disabilities live below poverty. Additionally individuals with disabilities aged 18-64 have an unemployment rate 13.6 percentage points higher than those without disabilities. As mentioned above, English proficiency is also a barrier to employment, however with the small geographic area involved with the state of RI, geographic isolation is not a major barrier. 11.8% of all Rhode Islander's aged 18-64 have a disability and RI SCSEP participants are comprised of 23% disabled enrollees.

G) Provide a description of the steps taken to avoid disruptions to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data become available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b))

The participants who were brought into RI SCSEP during the period of higher funding in PY10 and PY11 were not terminated from the program due to lower funding levels. The funding reductions have been countered with reduced participant training hours; and, by maintaining an "attrition period" while the participant enrollment level is brought in-line with the funds available. Total enrollment will continue to be gradually reduced through normal attrition, such as through job placements; participant-initiated exits; individual durational limits; and, "for cause" terminations. Also, SCSEP managers will ensure that current Participants are not adversely impacted by the new census data that requires a redistribution of authorizations among the three counties during the PY 2015 grant year. Specifically, authorized positions will be

redistributed according to the new Equitable Distribution ratios; however, changes to the actual enrollment levels in each County will only be adjusted through normal attrition.

APPENDIX

Appendix A



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Department of Labor and Training

Center General Complex
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920-4407

Telephone: (401) 462-8000

TTY via RI Relay 711

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

Scott R. Jensen
Director

November 17, 2015

Ms. Nancy J. Olson, Executive Director
Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920

Dear Ms. Olson:

Section 106(b)(2) of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA) states that the Governor shall approve a request for initial designation as a local area from any area that was designated as a local area for purposes of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 if that local area performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity for the 2-year period preceding the enactment of WIOA (July 22, 2014). The Governor has authorized the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training to act on her behalf in this matter.

For the purposes of initial local area designation, the term "performed successfully" means that the local area met or exceeded the negotiated levels of performance under WIA for the last 2 full program years before the enactment of WIOA and that the local area has not failed any individual measure for the last 2 consecutive program years.

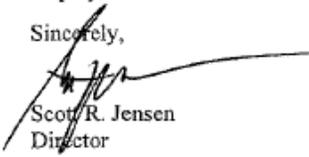
For the purposes of determining initial (and subsequent) designation, the term "sustained fiscal integrity" means that the United States Department of Labor has not made a formal determination that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area misexpended funds due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration for the 2-year period preceding the determination.

Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island has submitted a request for local area designation. A review of documentation indicates that all of the above conditions have been met.

Therefore, as the Governor's representative in this matter, I am pleased to inform you that the Greater Rhode Island Local Area is approved for initial designation for the period of Program Years 2015 and 2016 (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017) at which time a request for subsequent designation must be submitted.

As we move forward under WIOA, I look forward to working with you to meet the needs of Rhode Island's employers and its current and emerging workforce.

Sincerely,



Scott R. Jensen
Director

DLT is an equal opportunity employer/program - auxiliary aids and services available upon request.

Appendix B

Workforce Investment Notice 15-01

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-01DWAllocation.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-02

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-02AdultYouthAllocations.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-03

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-03DWAllocations.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-04

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-04AllocationsAdultYouth.pdf>

Workforce Investment notice 15-05

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-05WIOALocalAreaDesignationPolicy.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-06

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-06WIOALocalBoardCriteria.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-07

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-07PY14DataElementValidation.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-08

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-08TrackingYouth.pdf>

Workforce Investment Notice 15-09

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/WINotices/PY15/15-09CertProcess4ETPLs.pdf>

Appendix C

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS



Department of Labor and Training

Center General Complex
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920-4407

Telephone: (401) 462-8000
TDD: (401) 462-8006

Gina M. Raimondo

Governor

Scott R. Jensen

Director

To: Scott Jensen, Director, Dept. of Labor and Training
Melba Depena, Director, Dept. of Human Services
Stephen Osborn, Chief of Accelerating School Performance, Dept. of Education
From: Sarah Blusiewicz, Sr. Advisor to the Director, Dept. of Labor and Training
Date: February 5, 2016
Re: WIOA State Plan

One-Stop Stakeholder Meeting Recommendations

As part of the WIOA state planning process, the Department of Labor and Training convened a stakeholder group comprised of partner agencies, community providers, and education institutions on January 13th and 20th, 2016 to discuss the services and customer experience at Rhode Island's one-stop network. Participants responded to four discussion questions addressing client experience and tracking client progress through the services offered through the one-stop network and partnering organizations. Breakout groups provided detailed responses that were summarized into major themes when the groups reconvened. The original responses from the breakout groups are enclosed.

During the second meeting several follow-up projects were recommended by the stakeholder group. Due to the numerous government and non-government partners involved in delivering services through the one-stop network, the stakeholder group recognized the need for the departments administering programs under WIOA to jointly consider the enclosed recommendations. Participants volunteered to participate in any further inter-departmental convening or workgroups the departments may establish in response to any recommendation. A list of participants and their contact information is enclosed.

Participants in the one-stop stakeholder group request the departments consider the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Convene a workgroup of government and non-government partners to study the issue of common assessments and to provide recommendations to the departments for establishing a statewide common assessment policy.

Assessing an individual's current proficiency before providing services is a common practice for both government and community administered programs. However, different assessments of a similar competency are required by separate programs, which in some cases requires a client to take multiple assessment for the same competency before a service can be provided. Such duplication delays service provision to the client and consumes service program resources that could be put towards other needs of the client. Multiple assessment types including, adult basic education, work readiness, English proficiency, skills gap, and others, should be included in this study.

Recommendation 2: Convene a workgroup of government and non-government partners to develop solutions around collecting and sharing client information among one-stop network partners.

The need for all service providers to share information about a client and the previous services the client received was emphasized throughout the stakeholder meetings. The stakeholder group articulated the need for basic client data collection standards that all service providers could collect as part of an intake process. In addition to client intake information, the stakeholder group noted the need to determine what other data elements about a client should be shared among one-stop partners to increase the quality and efficiency of services provided. However, while all stakeholder supported exploring data sharing solutions, the issue of individual privacy rights and adhering to confidentiality statutes arose as an area of great concern for all stakeholders and should be included in the scope of the workgroup.

Recommendation 3: In collaboration with the two Local Workforce Development Boards, establish a team comprised of government and non-government partners to evaluate the client centeredness of the one-stop network and provide an action plan for increasing the client centeredness the one-stop network.

The stakeholder group included several topics under the conception of a client centered one-stop network. A major topic considered was client accessibility to the one-stop network. The issue of accessibility ranged from ensuring the hours of operation of career centers met the needs of clients to offering services in more geographic areas using technology, other partner organizations, and a mobile unit. Other topics considered included increase individualized attention and case management services to one-stop clients, ensure resources are provided to meet the language, education, physical, and technological needs of clients, and improve one-stop partner collaboration around delivering services to a shared client.

Recommendation 4: Convene a workgroup of government and non-government partners to develop information sharing standards to improve the quality of client referrals to programs.

Both government and non-government partners rely on provided program information to make informed decisions about referring a client to an education program, training, employer recruitment, or other service. However, information regarding the eligibility requirements of different opportunities may not provide enough detail for a quality referral to be made. For some

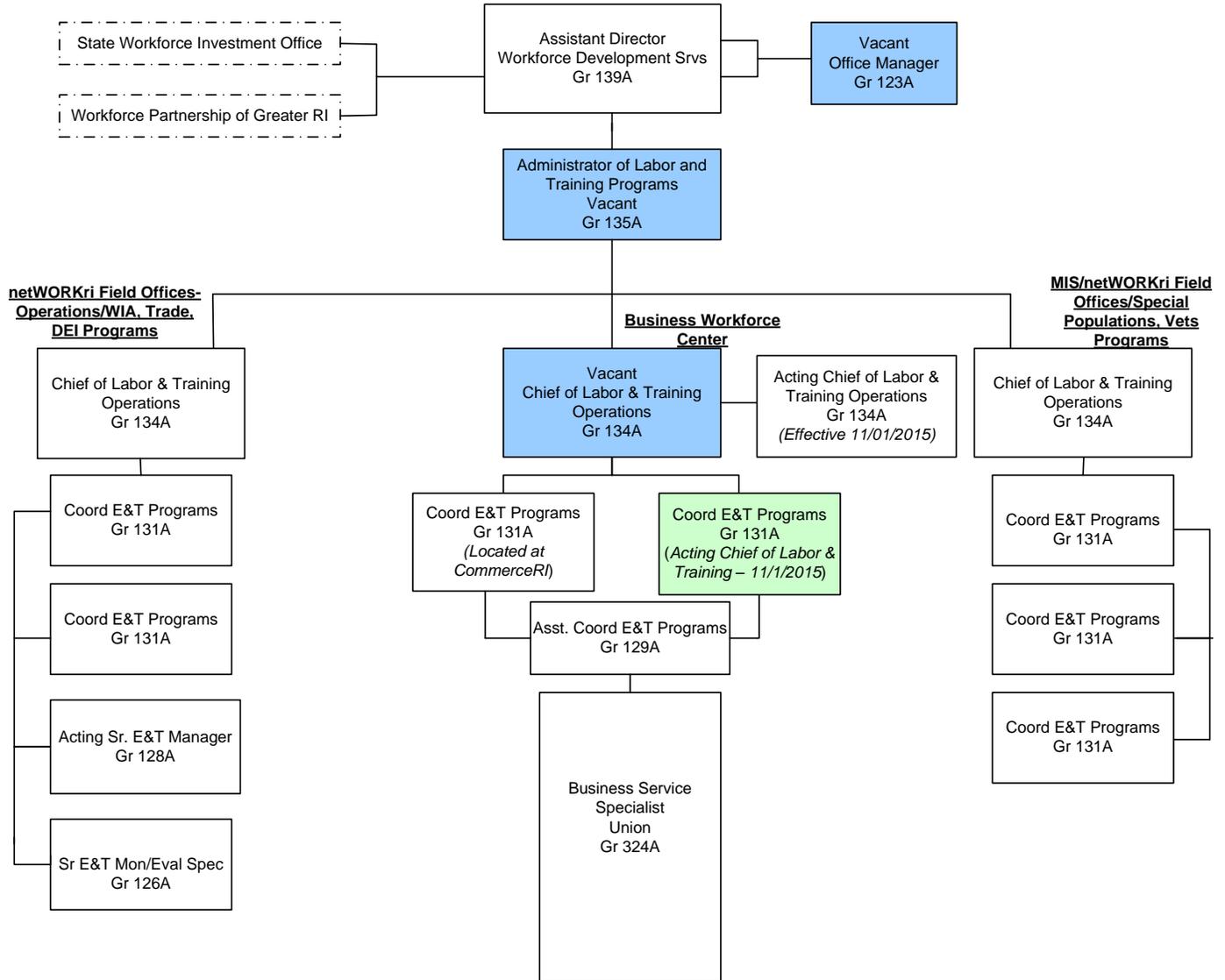
organizations the volume of referrals made on a daily basis makes following up on each potential referral unfeasible. Establishing basic standards for eligibility data elements would create a uniform format to provide organizations making referrals the information necessary to prevent referring a client to an opportunity for which they are ineligible. Such standards may include education level required, documents required, and any other application requirement.

Recommendation 5: In collaboration with the two Local Workforce Development Boards, establish an evaluation committee to develop performance measures to measure the effectiveness of the one-stop network beyond the requirements of federal program reporting and track those measures on a continuous basis.

Federal reporting requirements and other program specific performance measures do not provide enough information to perform an analysis of the effectiveness of the services provided through the one-stop network. In addition, federal and program reporting do not include measures that speak to the overall quality of the client experience. With recommendations and goals brought forth creating a more client centered one-stop network, performance measures should be developed to track indicators of client centeredness. Such aggregate level performance measurement is necessary to evaluate if the network-wide goals and improvements have been achieved.

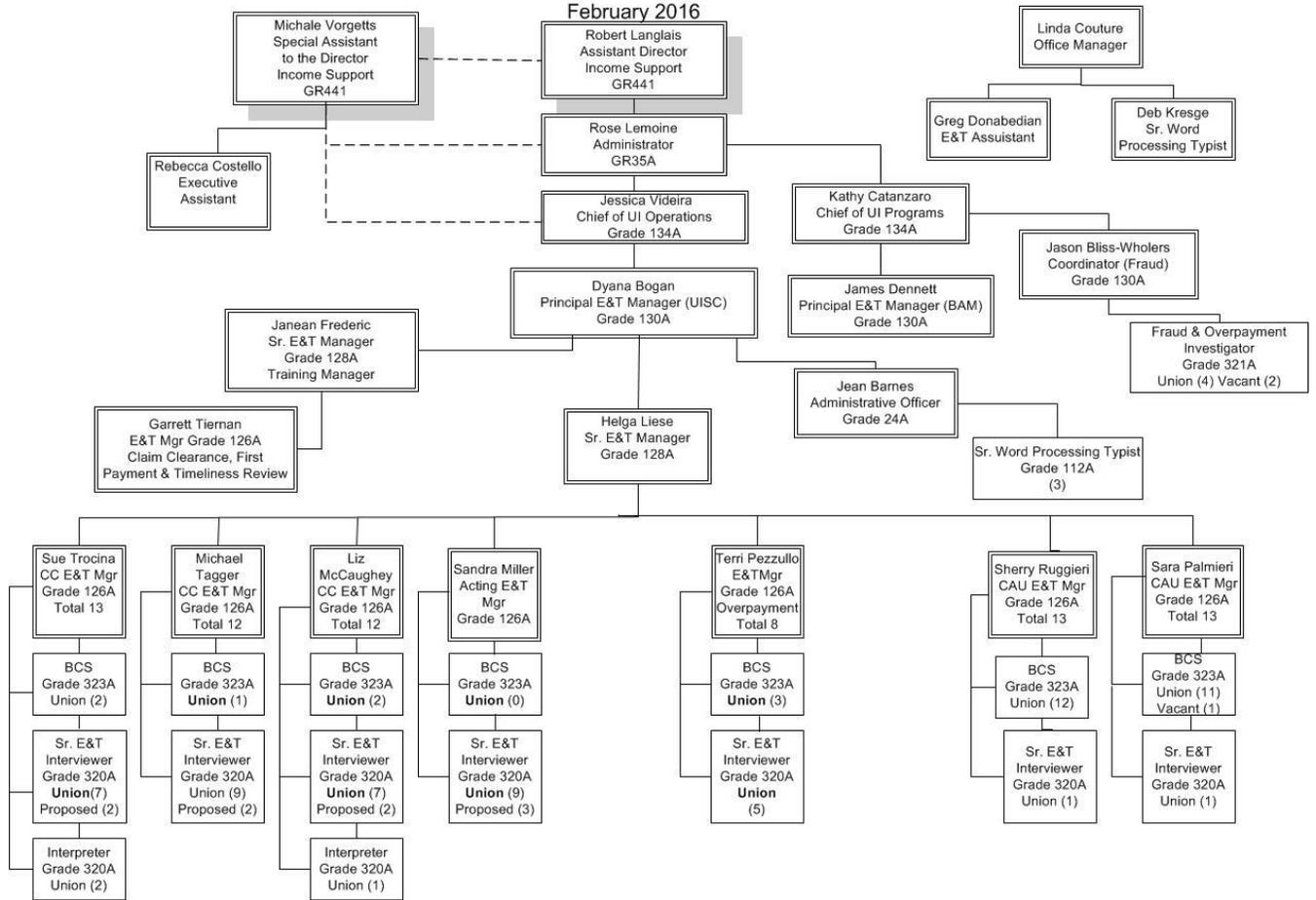
APPENDIX C

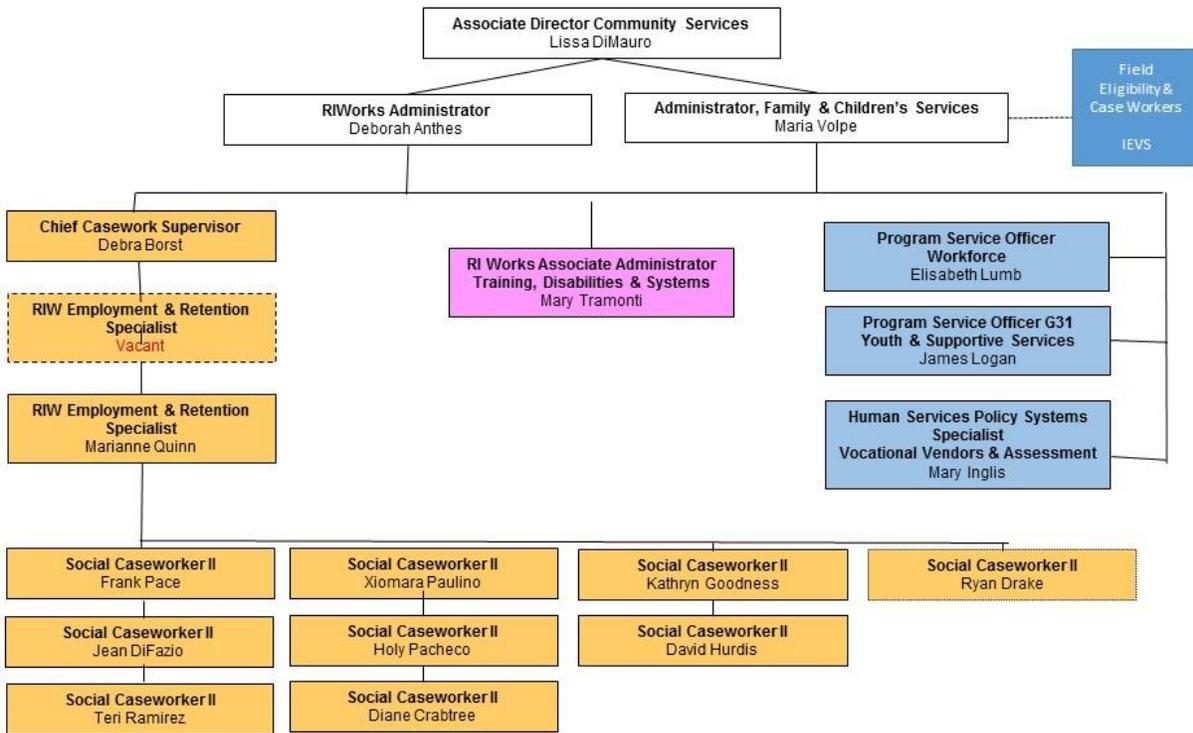
**RI Department of Labor & Training
Workforce Development Services Administration
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
March 2016**



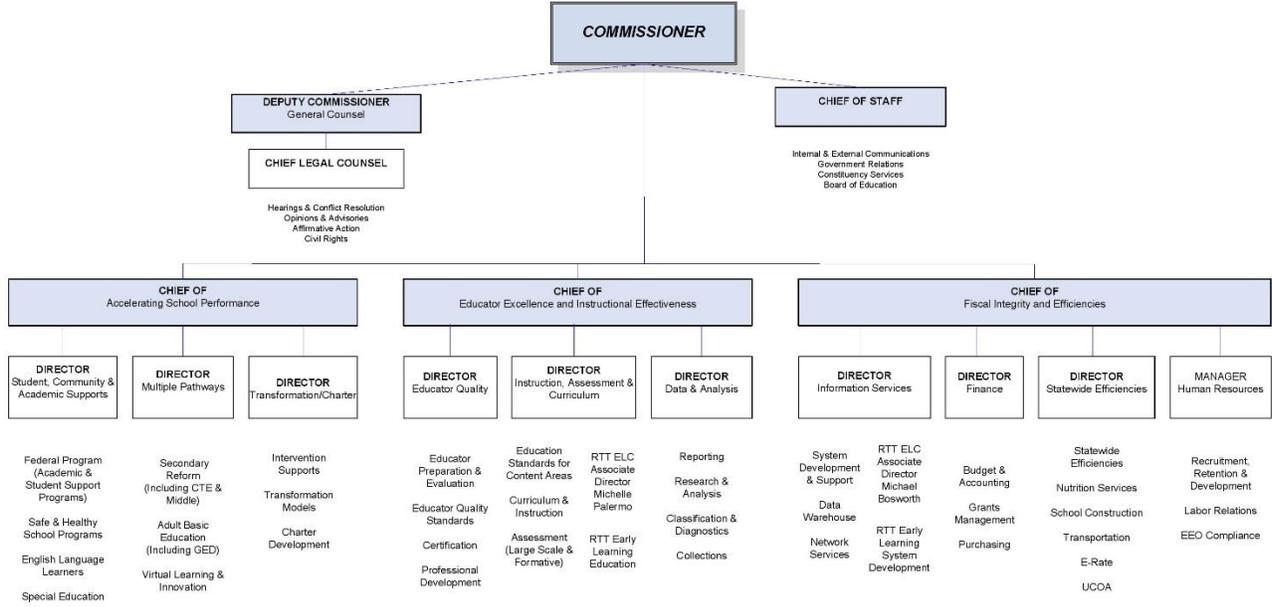
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
 INCOME SUPPORT DIVISION – UI Service Center
 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Administrative Benefits
 Office Staff





**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

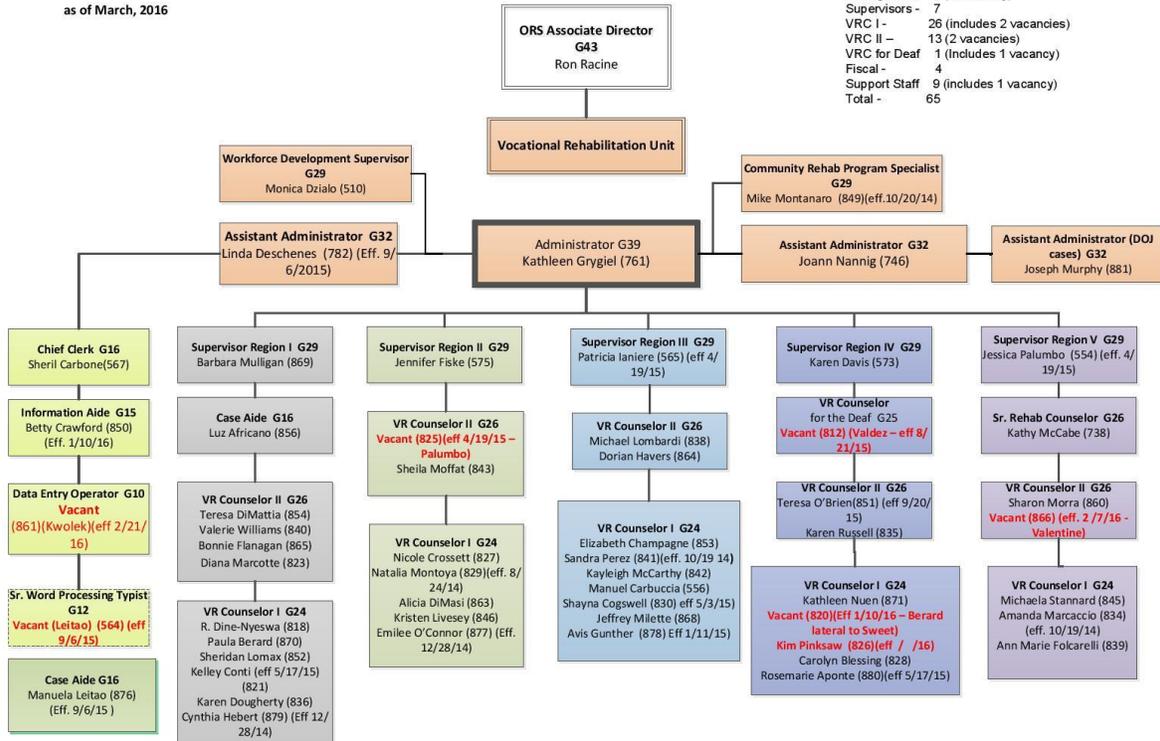


August 2014



as of March, 2016

Management - 5 (1 vacancy)
 Supervisors - 7
 VRC I - 26 (includes 2 vacancies)
 VRC II - 13 (2 vacancies)
 VRC for Deaf - 1 (includes 1 vacancy)
 Fiscal - 4
 Support Staff - 9 (includes 1 vacancy)
 Total - 65





State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services

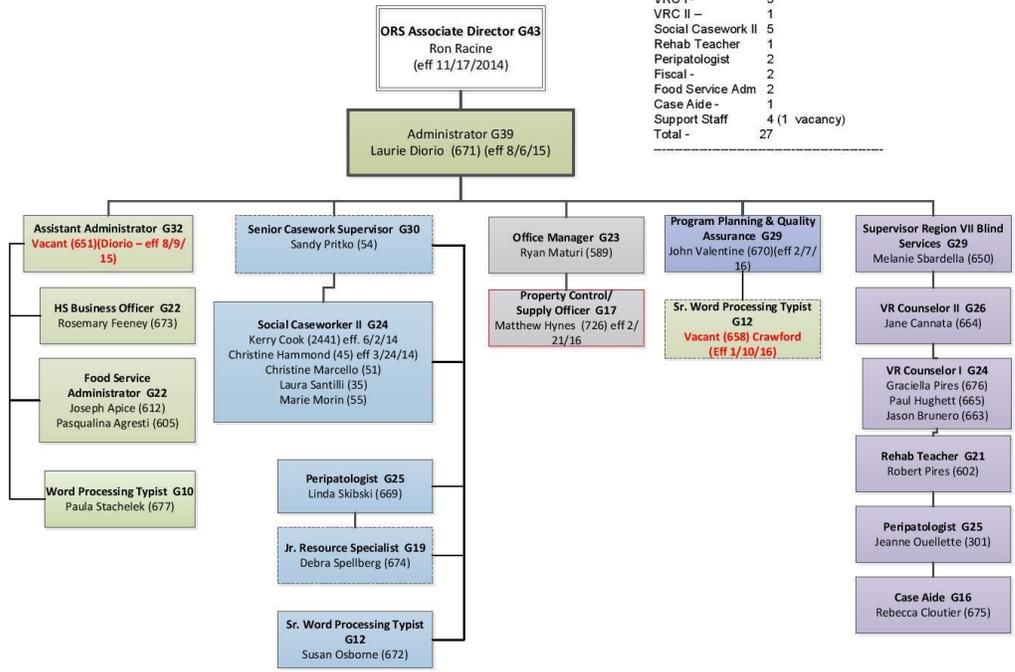
Melba Depena Affigne, Director | Gina Raimondo, Governor

Office of Rehabilitation Services
Chart B

Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired

as of March, 2016

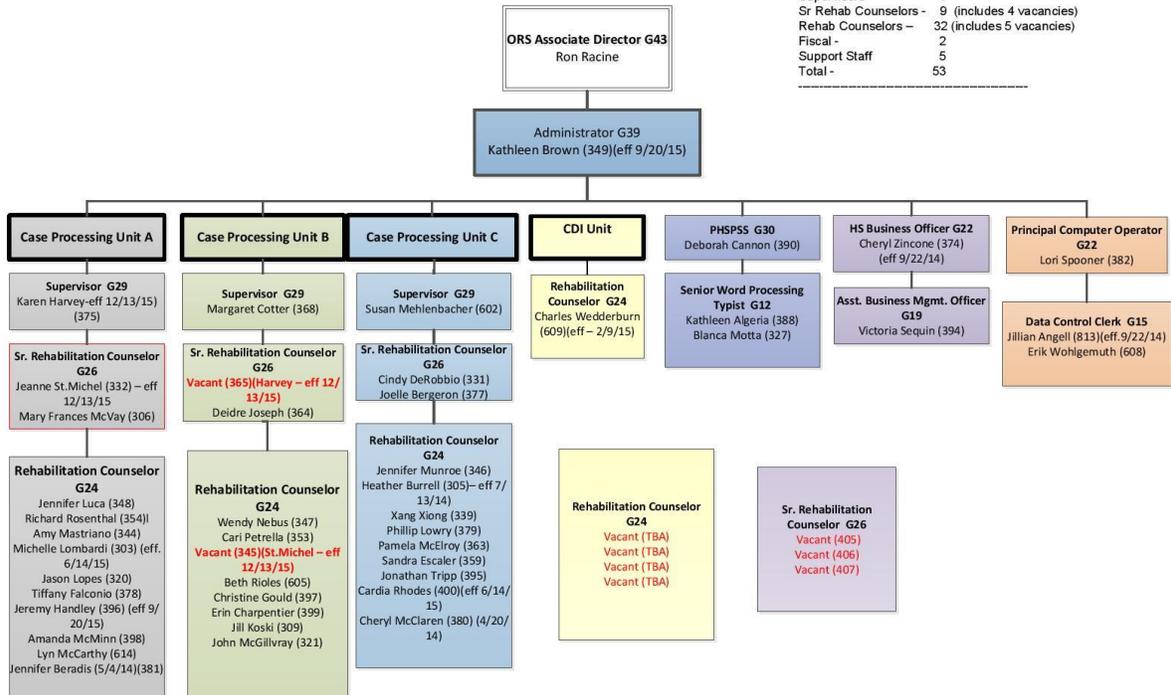
Management -	2 (1 vacancy)
Supervisors -	4
VRC I -	3
VRC II -	1
Social Casework II	5
Rehab Teacher	1
Peripatologist	2
Fiscal -	2
Food Service Adm	1
Case Aide -	1
Support Staff	4 (1 vacancy)
Total -	27





as of March, 2016

Management -	1
Supervisors -	4
Sr Rehab Counselors -	9 (includes 4 vacancies)
Rehab Counselors -	32 (includes 5 vacancies)
Fiscal -	2
Support Staff	5
Total -	53



3/1/2016



State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services
Melba Depena Affigne, Director | Gina Raimondo, Governor

Office of Rehabilitation Services

as of March, 2016

