



Governor's Workforce Board
Rhode Island
strategy • policy • funding • action

Accessing Untapped Talent: Disabilities Hiring Resource Guide For Employers



2024 Edition

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND TRAINING

1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920 | dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov | www.gwb.ri.gov | 401-462-8860

 RIGWB  @RI_DLT  RhodelslandDLT  ri_dlt

An equal opportunity employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request. TTY via RI Relay: 711.

A Message from the Governor's Workforce Board

To Our Employer Partners,

We are pleased to release this guide, which we hope you will find to be a valuable resource.

The Governor's Workforce Board is the primary policy-making body on workforce development matters for the State of Rhode Island, and has statutory responsibility and authority to plan, coordinate, fund, and evaluate education, employment and training programs that increase the skills of Rhode Island workers and address the needs of Rhode Island businesses.

While we've made significant progress in increasing labor force participation, unemployment and underemployment continue to disproportionately affect individuals with disabilities.

Every day, Americans with disabilities successfully bring their talent and skills to our nation's workplaces, performing all levels and types of jobs in all sizes of businesses.

In this guide, you will find information about programs and services designed to assist you in identifying and reaching untapped talent within the disabilities labor market. Some of these programs and services are federally funded, and others are supported by state and local dollars.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this guide, or the programs and services available to you, please do not hesitate to contact the Governor's Workforce Board.

We appreciate you picking up this guide and exploring the possibilities within your workplace!

Sincerely,




Michael Grey
Chairman




Alyssa A.C. Alvarado
Executive Director




Olivia Byron
Director of Employer
Workforce Programs

Table of Contents

Overview	
A Message from the Governor’s Workforce Board.....	2
Glossary of Agencies, Definitions, and Terms.....	4-5
Accessing Talent Pools	
Skills for Rhode Island’s Future.....	6
Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services.....	6
Community Provider Network of RI (CPNRI)/Provider Agencies.....	7
Assistive Technologies and Services	
Assistive Technology Access Partnership.....	8
TechACCESS of Rhode Island.....	8
Benefits Counseling	
Ticket to Work.....	8
The Paul V. Sherlock Center for Disabilities.....	8
Financial Resources (Disabilities Hiring Assistance and Incentives)	
Workplace Accessibility Grants.....	9
Work Immersion.....	9
Incumbent Worker Training Grants.....	9
On-the-Job Training.....	9
Rhode Island Investment Tax Credit.....	9
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).....	9
Disabled Access Tax Credit.....	9
Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction.....	9
Free Consultative Services and Other Resources	
Job Accommodation Network (JAN).....	10
Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN).....	10
Real Access Motivates Progress (RAMP).....	10
Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI).....	10
Transportation Assistance	
Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA).....	11
Uber.....	11

Glossary of Agencies, Definitions, and Terms

Agencies

Community Provider Network of Rhode Island (CPNRI) – The non-profit trade association of providers of services to people with disabilities (provider agencies). <https://cpnri.org>

Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) – The state agency that works to guarantee high-quality, safe, and accessible health care services through an integrated landscape. <https://bhddh.ri.gov>

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) – A division of BHDDH responsible for planning, funding, and overseeing a community system of services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities. <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities>

Governor’s Commission on Disabilities (GCD) – Works to ensure that all people with disabilities are afforded the opportunities to exercise all the rights and responsibilities accorded to citizens of this state and each person with a disability can reach his/her maximum potential in independence, human development, productivity, and self-sufficiency. <https://gcd.ri.gov>

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) – A national non-profit organization that helps employers recognize the valuable contributions that qualified workers with disabilities add to the workforce by providing accommodation solutions, trusted strategies, and practical guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). JAN is a leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on job accommodations and disability employment issues. <https://askjan.org>

Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) – A division of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS). The mission of ORS is to empower individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and integration into society. <https://ors.ri.gov>

Skills for Rhode Island’s Future (SkillsRI) – a non-profit organization that breaks down barriers to economic opportunity by connecting unemployed and underemployed Rhode Islanders to jobs with civic-minded employers. SkillsRI works directly with employers’ hiring teams and the SkillsRI **workABILITY** team specializes in disabilities hiring assistance. <https://skillsforri.com/workability>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) – Agency responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. EEOC provides materials that help job applicants, employees, employers, medical providers, and others understand disability discrimination in the workplace, including fact sheets, and disability-related guidance and policy documents. <https://www.eeoc.gov>

Definitions and Terms

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of life. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Assistive Technology (AT) – Products, systems, and services that help maintain or improve an individual’s cognition, communication, hearing, mobility, or vision. Examples of AT include:

- Audio Recorders and Personal Listening Devices (PLDs)
- Closed Captioning (CC)
- NEWSLINE©
- Teletypewriters (TTY) and Text-to-Speech (TTS) Technologies
- Touch Screens

Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) – A statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. ATAP's main initiatives include:

- Device Demonstrations and Loans
- Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information, and Referral

Partners include the Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL), East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC), Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of RI.

Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) – work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis for which an individual is: 1) Compensated at or above minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience; 2) Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions; 3) At a location where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities; and 4) Presented opportunities for advancement similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

Customized Employment (CE) – The process of customizing a Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunity or job in a way that meets the needs of both the employer and worker.

Disability – Any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them.

Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) – I/DDs include cognitive, physical, or a combination of impairments that are usually present at birth and diagnosed before age 18. They can affect many systems of the body, including the nervous system, sensory system, and metabolism. They may also be degenerative. An I/DD diagnosis is lifelong.

Provider Agencies – Organizations that receive funding to provide services and assistance to individuals with disabilities. Local examples include AccessPoint RI and Perspectives Corporation.

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) – Programming available through ORS that provides eligible individuals with visual impairments the opportunities and support that will enable them to become independent, active, self-sustaining members of their community.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) – A federal program that provides monthly payments to individuals with one or more disabilities that inhibit their ability to work.

Supported Employment (SE) – Services designed to help individuals with significant disabilities obtain and maintain Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) roles. Examples include specialized job preparation and on-site job coaching from an SE professional.

Accessing Talent Pools

The following state and non-profit agencies work with jobseekers with disabilities to help them find suitable employment opportunities. Additional information on each agency and the services they offer is outlined below.



Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)

The mission of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services is to assist individuals with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation, disability determination services, and access to assistive technology.

The Business Engagement Specialist Team (BEST) within the ORS Workforce Development Unit can help you diversify your workforce with qualified, motivated, and dependable employees through the following employer-focused services:

- Customized comprehensive task analysis
- Recruiting pre-screened, qualified applicants
- Providing a reliable, consistent long-term partnership
- Providing opportunities for no-cost work trials
- Referral services for current employees
- Customized consulting and training related to accommodations, assistive technology, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance

The benefits of hiring ORS candidates for employment include:

- Talents and skills that match businesses workforce needs
- Motivated, dependable employees
- Increased job retention/lower employee turnover
- Inclusive, diverse workforce
- Workplace innovation



For more information, please visit <https://ors.ri.gov/WorkforceDevelopment.html>, scan the QR code above, or contact the ORS Workforce Development Unit at (401) 787-0564.



Skills for Rhode Island's Future (SkillsRI)

Skills for Rhode Island's Future is a non-profit organization that breaks down barriers to economic opportunity by connecting unemployed and underemployed Rhode Islanders to jobs with socially responsible, civic-minded employers.

SkillsRI's **workABILITY** initiative is designed to help meet employer hiring needs while also considering their goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

How does it work?

1. The workABILITY team at SkillsRI offers free consultative services.
2. Our team of hiring professionals will carefully consider employers' needs and collaborate on establishing customized hiring initiatives.
3. Through collaboration with our community partners and providers, our staff will facilitate accommodation and support needs for our employers and candidates.



For more information, please visit <https://skillsforri.com/workability>, scan the QR code above or call SkillsRI at (401) 680-5960.



Community Provider Network of Rhode Island (CPNRI)

The Community Provider Network of Rhode Island is a network of service provider agencies and affiliates that employ more than 5,000 people and support over 20,000 individuals with disabilities throughout Rhode Island. Members include:

<p>AccessPoint RI 111 Comstock Parkway Cranston, RI 02920 (401) 941-1112 www.accesspointri.org</p>	<p>James L. Maher Center 906 Aquidneck Ave. Middletown, RI 02842 (401) 846-0340 www.mahercenter.org</p>	<p>ReFocus, Inc. 45 Greeley Street Providence, RI 02904 (401) 272-1600 www.refocusinc.org</p>
<p>Action Based Enterprises (ABE) 1675 Diamond Hill Road Woonsocket, RI 02895 (401) 597-0402 www.actionbasedenterprises.org</p>	<p>L.I.F.E, Inc. 490 Metacom Ave. Bristol, RI 02809 (401) 396-8010 www.lifeincri.org</p>	<p>Seven Hills RI 68 Cumberland Street Woonsocket, RI 02895 (401) 597-6700 www.sevenhills.org</p>
<p>Arc of Blackstone Valley 500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860 (401) 727-0150 www.bvcriarc.org</p>	<p>Living Innovations 535 Centerville Rd., Ste. P Warwick, RI 02886 (401) 732-0304 www.livinginnovations.com</p>	<p>Spurwink RI 1 Spurwink Place Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 781-4380 www.spurwinkri.org</p>
<p>Avatar 33 College Hill Rd, Bldg. 33 Warwick, RI 02886 401-826-7500 www.avatarresidential.com</p>	<p>Looking Upwards P.O. Box 4289 Middletown, RI 02842 (401) 847-0960 www.lookingupwards.org</p>	<p>The Fogarty Center 310 Maple Ave., Ste. 102 Barrington, RI 02806 (401) 245-7900 www.fogartycenter.org</p>
<p>C.O.V.E. Center 610 Manton Avenue Providence, RI 02909 (401) 751-0459 www.grodcnecenter.org</p>	<p>Opportunities Unlimited 1 Worthington Road Cranston, RI 02920 (401) 369-5318 www.oppunlimited.com</p>	<p>The Olean Center 93 Airport Road Westerly, RI 02891 (401) 596-2091 www.oleancenter.org</p>
<p>Corliss Institute 290 Main Street Warren, RI 02885 (401) 245-3609 www.corliss.org</p>	<p>Perspectives Corporation 1130 Ten Road, Suite B101 North Kingstown, RI 02852 (401) 294-3990 www.perspectivescorporation.com</p>	<p>United Cerebral Palsy of RI 200 Main St., Suite 210 Pawtucket, RI 02860 (401) 728-1800 https://ucpri.org</p>
<p>Gateways to Change 1060 Park Avenue Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 463-0000 www.gatewaystochange.info</p>	<p>proABILITY 25 Thurber Blvd. Smithfield, RI 02917 (401) 233-1634 www.proability.org</p>	<p>West Bay RI 158 Knight Street Warwick, RI 02886 (401) 738-9300 www.westbayri.org</p>
<p>J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Ctr. 3445 Post Road Warwick, RI 02886 (401) 739-2700 www.trudeaucenter.org</p>	<p>Project Friends 1372 Main Street Coventry, RI 02816 (401) 822-9127 www.coventryri.org</p>	<p>Whitmarsh House 1055 North Main Street Providence, RI 02904 (401) 351-7230 http://whitmarshcorp.org</p>

For additional information, please call (401) 773-7771 or visit: <https://cpnri.org>

For a complete list of all service providers, please visit <https://bhddh.ri.gov>

Assistive Technologies

Assistive Technology (AT) consists of products, systems, and services that help maintain or improve an individual's cognition, communication, hearing, mobility, or vision. Examples include:

- Audio Recorders and Personal Listening Devices (PLDs)
- Closed Captioning (CC)
- [NEWSLINE©](#)
- Teletypewriters (TTY) and Text-to-Speech (TTS) Technologies
- Touch Screens

The [Assistive Technology Access Partnership \(ATAP\)](#) is a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. ATAP's main initiatives include:

- Device Demonstrations and Loans
- Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information, and Referral

Partners include the Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL), the East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC), Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of Rhode Island.



[TechACCESS of Rhode Island](#) provides assistive technology (AT) services to people with disabilities of all ages. Services include evaluations, consultation, trainings, tech support, and professional development. They even offer free assistive technology demonstrations for the public. For more information, scan the QR code at left, visit www.techaccess-ri.org, or call **(401) 463-0202**.

For additional information regarding the Assistive Technology Access Partnership, visit: <https://ors.ri.gov> or call **(401) 421-7005**.

Benefits Counseling

Individuals receiving Social Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and considering returning to work – or working for the first time – may have questions about how that extra income will affect their benefits. For example:

- Will the amount of the monthly benefits change?
- Will benefits immediately stop?
- Will Medicare, Medicaid, or other benefits be at risk?

Social Security's [Ticket to Work](#) (Ticket) Program supports career development for people ages 18 through 64 who receive Social Security disability benefits and want to work. It can help them move toward financial independence by connecting them with the services and support they need.

A Benefits Counselor can also offer expert guidance based on specific circumstances and explain how earnings from work will affect Social Security benefits and how Social Security Work Incentives can ease the transition to work without immediately losing benefits.



The [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#) at Rhode Island College has a long history of providing high-quality work incentives benefits counseling to individuals with disabilities. Their services also include training and information sessions (both live and recorded). For more information, scan the QR code at left, e-mail sherlockcenter@ric.edu, or call **(401) 456-8072**.

Financial Resources (Disabilities Hiring Assistance and Incentives)

There are a variety of state and federal financial incentives to support employers in the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities. The **Governor's Workforce Board** offers several programs and services including:

- **Workplace Accessibility Grants** – The Workplace Accessibility Grant Program promotes employment and economic opportunity for individuals with disabilities through investment in accessible workplaces. It provides a 100% reimbursement for eligible costs up to \$5,000 per calendar year. All Rhode Island employers with fewer than twenty-five (25) employees and who meet the eligibility requirements may apply.
- **Work Immersion** – Work Immersion is designed to boost the employment prospects of new and returning workers (i.e., eligible students and unemployed or underemployed adults) through meaningful paid work experiences. The program can provide a 50% or 75% reimbursement for wages paid to eligible newly hired employees, up to \$6,000 per participant for up to five participants per calendar year.
- **Incumbent Worker Training Grants** – The Incumbent Worker Training Grant Program is designed to help Rhode Island employers remain competitive and help workers maintain and advance in their careers. It provides a 50% or 75% reimbursement for eligible costs on eligible training activities up to \$30,000 per calendar year for eligible entities.
- **On-the-Job Training** – On-the-Job Training is a federally-funded initiative that helps employers hire and train new workers through partial wage reimbursement. Positions must provide a minimum of 30 hours per week and an hourly wage of at least \$15.05. The maximum allowable reimbursement is currently \$25.05 per hour and up to \$26,052 per trainee.

The following state and federal tax credits are also available:

- **Rhode Island Investment Tax Credit** – Rhode Island has a ten percent (10%) Investment Tax Credit, which may be applied toward the Rhode Island business corporation tax and the personal income tax, for employers in specified industries who either pay above-average wages or invest at least two percent (2%) of total payroll costs in worker training.
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** – a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring and retaining individuals from certain target groups, including individuals with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Employers may be eligible for an annual tax credit of up to \$2,400 for each qualifying employee who works at least 400 hours during the tax year. Additionally, a credit of up to \$1,200 may be available for qualifying summer youth employees.
- **Disabled Access Tax Credit** – Small businesses with either \$1,000,000 or less in revenue or 30 or fewer full-time employees may take a federal tax credit of up to \$5,000 annually for the cost of providing reasonable accommodations such as sign language interpreters, readers, materials in alternative format (such as Braille or large print), the purchase of adaptive equipment, the modification of existing equipment, or the removal of architectural barriers.
- **Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction** – This annual deduction of up to \$15,000 is available to businesses of any size for the costs of removing barriers for people with disabilities. Examples include ramps, and curb cuts; providing wheelchair-accessible telephones, water fountains, and restrooms; making walkways at least 48 inches wide; and making entrances accessible.

Information on all programs and tax credits above can be found at: <https://gwb.ri.gov>

Free Consultative Services and Other Resources

The following local and national consultative tools and resources may also be of assistance.



Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

The Job Accommodation Network is a national non-profit organization and the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. They provide consultation for employers of all sizes and types.

For more information, scan the QR code above, visit <https://askjan.org>, or call 1-800-526-7234.



Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN)

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion offers information and resources to help employers recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities; build inclusive workplace cultures; and meet diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibilities (DEIA) goals.

For more information, scan the QR code, visit <https://askearn.org>, or e-mail earn@askearn.org.



Real Access Motivates Progress (RAMP)

RAMP is a national, Rhode Island-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit and 100% volunteer organization run by local advocate and USA SLICC Ambassador, Tina Guenette.

RAMP offers accessibility assessment and consultation services to small businesses free of charge!

Are you a small business owner who is concerned about accessibility? Do you think making your place of business more accessible will be too costly, or simply do not know where to start?

The **RAMP Roll-Through** is an accessibility assessment that will help you make your place of business accessible and disability-friendly in an affordable way!

RAMP also offers the following informational training services to small businesses:

- Access 101: Accessibility Design Standards for a Small Business
- Best Practices for Hiring People with Disabilities
- Disability Sensitivity Training
- Untapped: How to Market to People with Disabilities
- Accessibility Consultation for Special Events



For more information, scan the QR code above or visit www.rampisinclusion.org.



Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI)

Disability Rights Rhode Island is a nonprofit which provides training and education for groups and organizations in Rhode Island on multiple topics pertinent to the rights of and protection for individuals with disabilities. For more information, scan the QR code at left, visit <https://drri.org/services>, or call (401) 831-3150.

Transportation Assistance

Transportation can be a barrier to employment for individuals with disabilities. Individuals receiving services from a state agency may receive specialized transportation assistance through that agency. Alternatively, the following transportation resources may be able to help.

Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA)

The Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority is the state's bus system. Links with answers to frequently asked questions regarding services can be found below.



How do I ride the bus?

To learn how to ride, visit: www.ripta.com/how-to-ride

Does the bus run in my city/town?

To see if the bus runs in your area, visit: www.ripta.com/community

How do I pay for the bus?

To learn how to pay, visit: www.ripta.com/wave

I'm a student, are there any discounts for me?

If you are a college student, visit: www.ripta.com/students

I have a disability; can I use these services?

If you have a disability, visit: www.ripta.com/riders-with-disabilities

Low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities may qualify to ride fixed-route buses for free under [RIPTA's Reduced Fare Bus Pass Program](#).

Additionally, the [Ride Program](#) is for individuals with disabilities who would be unable to utilize the fixed-route buses or travel to and from bus stops. RIPTA offers paratransit service through the Ride Program, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). **ADA Paratransit provides door to door service and requires advanced reservations.**

For additional information, scan the QR code above or call Ride at **(401) 461-9760**.

Uber

In many areas, Uber now offers transportation services in wheelchair-accessible vehicles through the [Uber WAV](#) program. Benefits include:



- **Fast, flexible rides** (when and where WAV is available, riders can request a ride on demand)
- **Affordability** (the price of a WAV ride in the Uber app is comparable to the UberX basic ride option)
- **Specialized drivers** (every Uber WAV driver has completed a certification course to help passengers enter and exit the vehicle)

Riders with disabilities, or individuals who frequently accompany riders with disabilities on trips, can also request a waiver of wait time fees for their accounts by submitting a certification.

For more information, scan the QR code above, or visit: www.uber.com/us/en/about/accessibility



Governor's Workforce Board
Rhode Island
strategy • policy • funding • action