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Governor's Workforce Board
Rhode Island
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Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Greater Rhode Island Local Area Plan



July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2029

Submitted by:
**State Workforce
Development Board**
[Acting as a Local Board for the
Greater Rhode Island Local Area
under Authority Granted by the U.S.
Secretary of Labor]

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Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

Please answer the questions in Section 1 in eight (8) pages or less. The Department of Labor and Training’s Labor Market Information Division can assist in developing responses to the questions 1.1 through 1.3 below. See Local Plan References and Resources.

1.1 An analysis of the economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. This section should align with the industries and businesses identified in the state plan, including the industry clusters outlined in the state’s economic development strategy - “Rhode Island Innovates” reports I and II. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(A)]

The Greater Rhode Island Workforce Development area (hereinafter referred to as the 'GRI') is comprised of thirty-seven (37) of the state’s thirty-nine (39) cities and towns with a total combined estimated population of 822,531 (as of 2023).

Population growth has increased in the region. Approximately 75% of all Rhode Islanders lived in the GRI area in 2023.

In September 2024, the region’s unemployment rate was 3.6% and the regions labor force consisted of 454,606 individuals, with total employment of 438,122 and total unemployment of 16,484. Within the region, unemployment rates varied from a high of 5.2% in Woonsocket and 5.0% in Pawtucket to a low of 1.9% in Little Compton and 2.2% in Richmond.

Analysis by the state’s Labor Market Information division provides distribution of employment by industry for Rhode Island for the first quarter of 2024.

- Health Care and Social Assistance comprise the largest share of employment in the region, employing 49,496 individuals, accounting for roughly 17% of total private (non-governmental) employment.
- The second largest sector in the region is Retail Trade, employing 35,586 individuals, accounting for 12.1% of private employment.
- Accommodation & Food Services combine to form the third largest employment sector in the region, employing 34,526 individuals, accounting for 11.8% of the region’s employment.

The chart below provides the complete breakdown:

City and Town - 2024 First Quarter Quarterly Census of U.I. Covered Employment and Wages	
Sector	Employment
Total Private & Government	333,473
Total Private Only	293,725
Health Care & Social Assistance	49,496
Retail Trade	35,586
Accommodation & Food Services	34,526
Manufacturing	34,291
Professional & Technical Services	20,595
Finance & Insurance	20,394

Administrative Support & Waste Mngmnt.	17,330
Construction	16,461
Wholesale Trade	12,777
Other services (except Public Administration)	11,945
Transportation & Warehousing	9,103
Educational Services	9,001
Management of Companies & Enterprises	7,259
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	4,899
Information	4,350
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	4,318
Unclassified Establishments	64

The 2023 annual average private sector wage was \$63,505 in GRI, an increase of \$1,123 (+1.8%) from the 2022 annual wage.

- Management of Companies & Enterprises led GRI’s employment sectors with a 2023 annual wage of \$137,098.
- The Information sector reported the second highest private sector annual wage of \$106,409 followed by Finance & Insurance (\$104,958), Wholesale Trade (\$100,849) and Professional & Technical Services (\$98,911) sectors.
- The lowest annual average private sector wages were reported in Accommodation & Food Services (\$28,886) followed by Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (\$33,614), Retail Trade (\$41,733) and Other Services (\$43,386).

The 2023 annual statewide private sector wage was \$64,435 or \$929 (+1.5%) more than the GRI 2023 private sector wage.

In August of 2023, the Governor’s Workforce Board (GWB) prepared a data summary and quadrant analysis for Rhode Island’s twenty-two (22) major occupation groups or “occupational clusters.” This analysis done in conjunction with the State’s Labor Market Information (LMI) office differentiated the major occupations in Rhode Island by their total projected annual openings and the Median Wage for each occupational group as found in the LMI Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program. Annual openings were defined as “high” if they totaled more than a projected 500 per year and “low” if they fell below that 500 openings per year threshold. Secondly the State’s Median wage at publication was \$23.73 per hour – the occupational groups that fell below this number were considered “low” and the occupational clusters that paid above that hourly wage were considered “high”.

The findings from the study revealed eleven (11) out of the twenty-two (22) occupational groups fell within the high wage/high openings quadrant, as follows:

- 1) Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- 2) Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- 3) Business and Financial Operations Occupations
- 4) Community and Social Service Occupations
- 5) Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- 6) Construction and Extraction Occupations
- 7) Education, Training, and Library Occupations
- 8) Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations

- 9) Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occupations
- 10) Management Occupations
- 11) Protective Service Occupations

Research work between LMI, GWB and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) has continued at the 5-digit occupational level.

In September of 2024 an initial report was developed under the direction of the GWB to compare local occupational demand data to the annual talent output from local institutes of higher education (both public and private). The purpose of the exercise was to identify occupational areas where new or expanded programming is likely needed to increase the supply of skilled talent. More specifically, to identify areas where the annual talent output is too low even if every graduate stayed in state AND entered a career related to their field of study. To view copies of the report, please visit: <https://gwb.ri.gov/policies-reports-plans/priority-occupations>.

1.2 An analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B)]

To address the employment needs of employers in the GRI region, it is essential to align workforce skills and knowledge with both current demand and projected growth in key sectors. The approach relies on a blend of traditional education, work-based learning, and targeted training to meet evolving labor market needs.

Focus on Middle-Skilled Occupations and Training Pathways

Workforce development initiatives continue to emphasize middle-skilled occupations that require specialized training but not necessarily a four-year degree. Identified high-demand roles include:

- **Healthcare:** Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Medical Laboratory Technologists, and Pharmacy Technicians remain in demand due to demographic shifts and expanded healthcare services.
- **Manufacturing:** CNC Machinists, Production Technicians, and Assembly Technicians, reflecting growth in Transportation Equipment and Food Manufacturing, lead demand within this sector.
- **Construction:** Electricians, Pipelayers, Plumbers, and Supervisors of Construction Workers represent critical occupations in a sector projected to grow by 9.3% through 2032.

Employers in these sectors increasingly seek candidates with industry-recognized credentials, gained through pathways such as apprenticeships, internships, and On-the-Job training (OJT). This dual focus of hands-on experience and classroom training ensures that individuals transition effectively into key roles, bolstering both skill development and employability.

STEM Competencies and Essential Skills

While many occupations, particularly in manufacturing and healthcare, benefit from proficiency in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, the importance of essential, non-technical skills cannot be overstated.

Rhode Island employers consistently emphasize skills that are critical for workplace success, such as:

- Critical Thinking
- Reading Comprehension

- Active Listening
- Speaking
- Complex Problem Solving
- Judgment and Decision Making
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Writing

In addition, competencies such as social media management, data analytics, multilingual proficiency, and cultural competency have grown in importance due to the state’s evolving and interconnected economic landscape.

Emerging and High-Growth Sectors

Key sectors projected for growth provide further context for workforce development:

- **Health Care and Social Assistance:** Projected to add over 8,000 jobs by 2032, driven by an aging population and increasing demand for services, with roles in Ambulatory Health Care and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities taking center stage.
- **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services:** Expected to add over 3,000 jobs (10.3% growth), reflecting rising demand for specialized expertise across fields such as legal services, engineering, and consulting.

These projections underscore the importance of aligning training efforts with employer needs, fostering a workforce prepared to meet both immediate and long-term demand.

Statewide Workforce Development Initiatives

Programs such as Rhode Island Promise, which offers two years of tuition-free community college for eligible students, exemplify the state’s commitment to increasing postsecondary attainment. These initiatives complement the efforts of the WIOA system by closing skills gaps and enhancing workforce readiness, ensuring alignment between educational attainment and the evolving needs of Rhode Island’s employers. Continued evaluation of such programs' effectiveness remains a priority to maximize their impact on both the workforce system and individual career outcomes.

1.3 An analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C)]

GRI is comprised of thirty-seven (37) cities and towns with a total combined estimated population of 822,531 (as of 2023). Approximately 75% of all Rhode Islanders lived in the GRI area in 2023. According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), the demographic composition of the area was:

- Whites 77.2%
- Black or African American 3.6%
- Asian 2.8%
- Two or More Races 11.8%
- Some Other Race 4.1%
- Roughly 12% of GRI residents are of Hispanic or Latino origin.
- 13.9% of GRI residents have a disability.

The ACS indicates that 27.1% percent of GRI household population (aged 25 and older) have a high school diploma or equivalent, 16.3% have at least some college-level courses, and 48.1% have an associate degree or higher. 8.6% of working age GRI residents lack a high school diploma, a rate that is lower than the statewide total of 10.4%.

As of September 2024, the unemployment rate in the region was 3.6% with a labor force of 454,606 individuals, total employment of 438,122 and total unemployment of 16,484. Within the region, unemployment rates varied from a high of 5.2% in Woonsocket and 5.0% in Pawtucket to a low of 1.9% in Little Compton and 2.2% in Richmond.

Data regarding certain subpopulations with barriers to employment was only available on a statewide basis and is not exclusive to the GRI workforce development area. This data is below:

- According to the 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, there were approximately 1,810 homeless people in Rhode Island in 2023. The unsheltered homeless rate in Rhode Island was 18.5%. ([The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress: Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness | HUD USER](#))
- According to 2022 ACS data (the most recent data available) roughly 95,523 of Rhode Islanders could be categorized as Limited English Proficient. Of this total, 65.9% spoke Spanish as their primary language, 14.6% spoke Portuguese, 3.4% spoke Khmer, 3.2% spoke Chinese, and 12.9% spoke some other language.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 240,813 adults in Rhode Island have a disability, representing about 28% of the state's adult population. (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/rhode-island.html>)
- According to the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, as of December 31, 2022, there were 17,320 individuals under probation and 380 under parole, totaling 17,700 residents under community supervision. This equates to about 1 in every 48 adult residents being on probation or parole. Nationally, Rhode Island ranks 10th in the rate of individuals under community supervision, with 1,911 per 100,000 residents, surpassing the national average. ([National Institute of Corrections - https://nicic.gov/resources/nic-library/state-statistics/2022/rhode-island-2022](#))

1.4 An analysis and description of adult and dislocated worker workforce development activities, including type and availability of education, training and employment activities. Include analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services, and the capacity to provide such services, in order to address the needs identified in 1.2. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(D) & 108 (b)(7)]

GRI Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are designed around goals, needs, and demands of customers and local employers. Through a collaborative approach that leverages our state agencies and non-profits, GRI administrators and counselors have access to labor market insights regarding relevant information in efforts to provide the context necessary to help job seekers find good jobs. By integrating real-time insights from employer partners and aligning with regional industry needs, participants can access a continuum of services including:

- **Basic Career Services:** Eligibility, job placement, skills assessment, and guidance on available services, training programs, and financial aid.

- **Individualized Career Services:** Skill assessments, personalized employment plans, career counseling, and digital literacy training.
- **Training Services:** Financial support for postsecondary training for those needing additional skills for economic self-sufficiency.
- **Follow-Up Services:** Up to twelve (12) months of support, including counseling and job retention assistance.

By leveraging advanced technology to prepare staff for AI disruptions, ensure precise tracking data, and foster co-enrollment through consistent policy integration with partners like foster youth programs, GRI is working to enhance its service delivery. With a focus on continuous improvement and professional development our frontline staff for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are constantly improving.

The challenge is working to increase awareness and visibility with year-over-year funding decreases. While unemployment goes down the number of individuals chronically unemployed slowly increases.

There are also challenges in co-enrollment around other workforce services outside of WIOA. There's a reluctance to co-enroll due to concerns about eligibility. Our policy team has been working to create clear guidance on how to co-enroll and what individuals are eligible for co-enrollment depending on the services they've received from WIOA and other workforce services.

1.5 An analysis and description of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices, for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

WIOA Youth services are provided through non-profit partners that are solicited through a competitive process and contracted to administer the programming. These partnerships are throughout the state and are with organizations that have deep connections to the youth community and the population they serve.

Through these established relationships, GRI has been able to serve youth in multiple capacities outside of WIOA funding while also connecting them to employers and career pathways.

The youth feedback from surveys and focus groups was the most positive feedback amongst all WIOA services; citing organization staff and that youth centers provided safe spaces for them.

The WIOA Youth providers offer career readiness and work-based learning experiences. Youth providers work with local businesses that benefit youth in multiple ways. One way it benefits the youth is removing the barrier of transportation by working with local businesses youth have job sites in proximity to their centers.

The challenge with WIOA Youth programming is seamlessly connecting youth who have completed Youth WIOA program into adult services. Youth found the programming effective but felt lost after they completed it. GRI is working to facilitate smooth transition processes to adult services.

Youth WIOA also struggles to connect youth with high-growth and high-wage jobs. These industries tend to have many barriers from age restrictions, safety concerns, and reluctance to work with youth. We strive to address this challenge by connecting youth providers to high-growth and high-wage employers who have built relationships with our other workforce services and have become less reluctant to work with WIOA.

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

Please answer the questions in Section 2 in ten (10) pages or less. Section 2 responses should be greatly influenced by the members of the local workforce development board and other community stakeholders.

2.1 Provide the board's vision and goals for its local workforce system in preparing an educated and skilled workforce in the local area, including goals for youth and individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]

Vision: GRI will deliver workforce development services through an integrated, job-driven system that links diverse talent to employers. These workforce development services will support the development of a strong, vibrant local economy where businesses thrive, and people want to live and work.

Goal 1: Increase the quality and accessibility of services that jobseekers and employers receive at local AJCs by incorporating emerging technology and other innovative solutions.

Goal 2: Increase the use of proven service delivery models and best practices in serving justice-involved individuals including but not limited to youth and other vulnerable populations.

Goal 3: Increase communication and alignment between our workforce system, K-12, and post-secondary education systems.

Goal 4: Continue to align policy to increase the quantity and utilization of registered apprenticeships.

Goal 5: Increase system utilization by small business employers.

Goal 6: Work with community partners to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the workforce system.

2.2 Describe how the board's vision and goals align with and/or supports the vision of the Governor's Workforce Board of Rhode Island (RI's State Workforce Development Board). See Local Plan References and Resources.

Vision: The GWB envisions a Rhode Island where individuals from all income and skill levels, no matter their present economic circumstance, receive the resources and supports necessary to improve the economic condition of themselves and their families. In the process, Rhode Island employers receive a distinct competitive advantage in the form of a strong, diverse, and talented labor market to power their growth.

The Local Plan has been developed in alignment with the State Plan's vision and goals. The State Plan emphasizes being ready for the changes in the economy such as how the COVID-19 pandemic increased work from home, the acceleration of automation, artificial intelligence, and the impact it's creating on the economy, increasing the needs for digital literacy. The State Plan builds on the foundation of sector strategies, career pathways, and enhancing service delivery.

As described in Section 1, GRI identified industry sectors that account for a significant portion of the region's economy in labor, wages, and investment. These industries include:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Manufacturing

- Professional and Technical Services
- Finance and Insurance

It also includes sectors like Administrative Support and Waste Management, Construction, Wholesale Trade, and Other Services (except Public Administration). Additionally, industries such as Transportation and Warehousing, Educational Services, Management of Companies and Enterprises, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Information, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing are represented.

GRI is focused on refining and integrating existing workforce development strategies while also adapting to new challenges. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, services went virtual, and a new infrastructure was created to accommodate the crisis. This new system continues to operate while services are also available in-person again. Accordingly, GRI is focused on continuing virtual services, integrating the new virtual services into our existing in-person infrastructure, and bolstering our in-person system by leveraging technology solutions to create efficient service delivery that meets the needs of all clients including our most marginalized. GRI is focused on addressing specific disparities, related to race, ethnicity, and economic status. Through increased interagency collaboration to better serve including foster youth and justice-involved individuals, we are well-positioned to increase client outcomes.

2.3 Describe how the board’s goals, strategies, programs, and projects align with and will contribute to achieving the GWB’s key goals below:

GOAL 1: Continue to utilize demand-driven, sector-based strategies to develop pipelines of skilled workers that meet employer workforce needs and support the state’s economic development priorities.

GOAL 2: Advance career pathway strategies to provide education, training, employment, and support services for current and future workers, particularly those with barriers to employment and/or economic mobility (including TANF recipients).

GOAL 3: Align policy and leverage existing structures and resources so that government is networked and coordinated to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness throughout the workforce system.

GOAL 4: Use data to inform policy-making decisions, guide investments and evaluate performance to measure return on investments.

The local plan is aligned with the four key goals identified in the State Plan. The GRI Workforce development area will work with community-based organizations, state agencies, and local partners to implement our core programs and related activities to increase outcomes. This means using co-enrollment to leverage existing structures and resources and aligning our work with the national federal programs to create a workforce that builds on what we are doing well.

GOAL 1

Sector-based strategies will be a key component in aligning workforce training with the specific needs of high-growth industries. These strategies will be designed to address the demand for skilled workers in sectors that are critical to the local economy, such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, and clean energy.

By closely collaborating with industry leaders, education providers, and economic development agencies, we will ensure training programs equip job seekers with the skills needed to thrive in these sectors. This approach will not only ensure that our workforce is prepared for current and future job opportunities but will also help

businesses access the talent they need to remain competitive.

GOAL 2

The integration of career pathways as a central strategy for connecting jobseekers to sustainable employment and advancement opportunities is key. Career pathways are being developed in collaboration with local employers, educational institutions, and workforce partners to provide clear, structured routes for individuals to acquire the skills and credentials needed for high-demand occupations. These career pathways include On-the-Job Training (OJT), Customized Training (CT), Contract-Based Training, and Apprenticeships. These pathways will include a combination of education, training, and support services tailored to the unique needs of diverse populations, including youth, individuals with barriers to employment, and underrepresented groups. By aligning training programs with industry needs, career pathways will ensure that participants are prepared for entry-level positions with opportunities for progression to higher-wage jobs. By working with community-based organizations, we will be able to reach marginalized individuals to onboard them into these pathways.

GOAL 3

By fostering strong collaboration, policies will align, and we'll leverage existing government structures and resources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. With strong interagency collaboration through attending working groups and committees our agency peers will streamline processes across workforce, education, health and human services, and economic development programs. This approach will include enhancing data sharing and communication between state and local agencies to better identify gaps and coordinate services. The plan will focus on reducing duplication of efforts by integrating existing programs and aligning them with workforce priorities, ensuring that all resources contribute to a cohesive strategy for economic growth. Leveraging these government structures will also involve engaging local leaders and community organizations in decision-making processes to ensure that policies are responsive to the unique needs of our population. This alignment will create a more agile, responsive workforce system that increases positive outcomes for both job seekers and employers.

GOAL 4

The role of data is critical in making informed policy decisions, guiding investments, and evaluating performance to measure return on investment (ROI). By leveraging real-time labor market information, demographic data, and program outcomes, GRI will ensure that resources are allocated to areas with the greatest impact.

Data-driven decision-making will be central to identifying emerging industry needs, assessing the effectiveness of training programs, and making necessary adjustments to strategies. Performance metrics will be utilized to track progress against established goals, ensuring that investments yield measurable outcomes in terms of job placements, wage growth, and long-term employment retention. Data will also continue to be utilized to forecast the potential impact of emerging technology.

2.4 Describe board actions to become and/or remain a high-performing board. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(18)]

For the purposes of this element, the GWB considers a high-performing local board as a board that:

- ensures the yearly attainment of goals, strategies, and operational elements as articulated in applicable law, regulation, contract(s) and agreement(s);
- ensures the expectations outlined in the State WIOA Plan, program grant and associated requirements, and federal guidance are achieved;
- meets its varied responsibilities including fiduciary and administrative in a professional manner;
- upholds its mission of being accountable to the workforce area stakeholders; and
- abides by other policies and expectations as determined by the Governor's Workforce Board.

To remain a high-performing board, the local workforce board will continue to implement a comprehensive strategy that ensures the attainment of goals, strategies, and operational elements.

The board has robust oversight mechanisms, including regular financial reviews, compliance reviews, and transparent reporting processes. The Local Area Advisory Committee (LAAC) was added in response to the waiver authority granted by the U.S. Secretary of Labor for the State Workforce Development Board to act as the Local Workforce Development Board for the GRI region.

The GWB is committed to:

- Ensuring all goals and expectations are met, including compliance with federal requirements.
- Regular comprehensive review of all local area policies, procedures, and program requirements.
- Increasing outreach to employers and community-based organizations including soliciting feedback.
- Reviewing trends in economic and demographic data.
- Regular review of programs, partnerships, and policies of the GRI region.

The Local Area Advisory Committee is committed too:

- Crafting and overseeing the execution of local policies.
- Working with local partners to solicit feedback and input.
- Working strategically with the state and local economic development agencies to create a pipeline of qualified workers who meet the workforce needs of local employers.
- Keeping the Local Area Advisory Committee of the board updated on performance, service levels, and programming in the GRI region.

The Board will uphold its mission through continuous information sharing for members, ensuring they are equipped with the latest knowledge to guide effective decision-making. By maintaining these high standards, the Board will continue to deliver exceptional workforce development services, fostering economic growth and job creation in the local area.

2.5 Describe how the board's goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures. See Local Plan References and Resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]

GRI will utilize the goals and strategies in this plan to assist in negotiating federal performance measures. By incorporating sector-based strategies, we focus on high-demand industries that offer sustainable employment opportunities, which directly support measures related to job placement, retention, and wage growth.

The development of clear career pathways ensures that participants receive the necessary training and credentials to secure and advance in their careers, which is crucial for achieving performance targets related to credential attainment and skills gains.

Through co-enrollment, better integration of service delivery, and increase wraparound services we'll increase performance outcomes. In collaboration with our LMI division, we'll use data analysis to have better insight for data-driven decision making so we can align programs and policy to improve outcomes.

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

Please answer the questions in Section 3 in eight (8) pages or less. Many of the responses below, such as targeted sector strategies, should be based on strategic discussions with the local board and partners.

3.1 Taking into account the analysis in Section 1, describe the local board’s strategy to work with the organizations that carry out core programs to align resources in the local area, in support of the vision and goals described in Question 2.1. See Local Plan References and Resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(F)]

GRI works to align strategy and resources with a variety of entities to implement WIOA in the area. We negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all service partners to carefully align expectations and provisions of WIOA partner services in and outside the American Job Centers. We also meet regularly with partners to foster collaboration, streamline services, and ensuring that all efforts are direct towards achieving our shared vision and goals.

In coordination with the One-Stop Operator, partner staff are notified of changes and updates to services and programs. Together, partners ensure resources and services are coordinated to support all customers.

To continue alignment between programs, GRI will work with the Governor’s Workforce Board, the Local Area Advisory Committee, and GRI’s partners. These three groups are comprised of key decision makers, policy leads, and core program partners. Through these three bodies we can make significant change and keep lines of communication open. These stakeholders will lead our strategy in increasing co-enrollment and the quality, and accessibility of services.

3.2 Identify the programs/partners that are included in the local workforce development system. Include, at a minimum, organizations that provide services for Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2)]

NAME OF PARTNER	PARTNER PROGRAMS
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIOA Adult Programs under WIOA Title I • WIOA Dislocated Worker Programs under WIOA Title I • WIOA Youth Programs under WIOA Title I • Programs Authorized under of the Second Chance Act of 2007 • Employment Services under the Wagner-Peyser Act • Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs under WIOA Title I • Programs under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 • Programs Authorized under Chapter 41 of Title 38, U.S.C. Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Programs • Activities Authorized under Chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 • Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) • Programs under State Unemployment Compensation Laws
Rhode Island Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education and Literacy Programs under Title II of WIOA • Postsecondary Vocational Education Activities under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act
Rhode Island Office of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs Authorized under Parts A and B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 WIOA Title IV

Rehabilitation Services	
Exeter Job Corps Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Corps Programs Authorized under WIOA Title I
Rhode Island Indian Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native American Programs Authorized under WIOA Title I
Cumberland Housing Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and Training Activities Carried Out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
Rhode Island Department of Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TANF Programs Authorized under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act
Tri-County Community Action Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Service Block Grant Programs

3.3 Describe efforts to work with partners identified in 3.2 to support alignment of service provision to contribute to the achievement of goals and strategies. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2)]

GRI utilizes partner meetings to align services at the AJCs. Through this work, we ensure that we have seamless delivery of workforce services, improve our referral system, and build consensus on system changes. We examine how other local areas have bolstered co-enrollment and discuss the challenges to integrate similar systems in our area. Through examining best practices, collaboration, and consistent communication we have been able to increase co-enrollment across services. Currently, we are exploring the implementation of a statewide referral system that many partners have an interest in.

3.4 Describe strategies to maximize coordination of services in order to improve services and avoid duplication. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(12)]

GRI has developed a strategy to improve services and avoid duplication by creating a seamless delivery of services. Through professional development and support for counselors, administrators, and community engagement, system change will happen. These strategies may include aligned entry through a statewide referral system. As new technologies make older technology less expensive, we are taking an approach that utilizes the tools at our disposal that yield the best results. Through working with the Providence Cranston Local Area, we can avoid duplication, increase collaboration, and share success stories as well.

3.5 Identify how the local board will carry out a review of local applications submitted under WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy, consistent with the local plan and state provided criteria. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13)]

The local board is required to coordinate with eligible WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy providers and review applications to determine whether they are aligned with the local plan. The staff of GRI will work with the Board, stakeholders, community organizations and education providers to offer insights and recommendations to ensure the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) activities under WIOA are consistent with the local plan. The Board will provide feedback and recommend modifications to RIDE if needed to ensure that the programs are fully aligned with local and state workforce development goals.

3.6 Describe efforts to support and/or promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, in coordination with economic development and other partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5)]

As mandated by state statute, the Secretary of the Rhode Island Executive Office of Commerce holds the

position of Vice Chair on the State Workforce Development Board. This strategic alignment enhances collaboration between the workforce development system and the state's economic development initiatives.

A key focus for the Office of Commerce in recent years has been establishing a comprehensive network of resources and organizations to support startups and entrepreneurs, fostering the growth of small and micro businesses and self-employment opportunities. GRI aims to better integrate with various entrepreneurial and microenterprise programs offered.

3.7 Describe how the local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(10)]

The GRI area is well-served by six colleges and universities, including multiple campuses of the state's community college, and a new effort by the Rhode Island Governor's Office called Learn365 which is funding workforce and education centers through the state. This ensures that residents have access to a wide range of in-demand training programs. In alignment with sector-driven efforts, the Board works to connect industry partners with these postsecondary institutions, including those in the Providence-Cranston workforce development area, to review and align training programs with employer needs and educational standards.

While WIOA primarily focuses on linking individuals with employment, Rhode Island has prioritized increasing postsecondary attainment and credentialing. A new statewide initiative called Rhode to Prosperity is leading policy efforts that link workforce and education to identify occupational areas where new or expanded programming is likely needed to increase the supply of skilled talent. GRI plays a crucial role in this effort by offering financial support to lower-income individuals pursuing postsecondary education through individual training accounts (ITAs) and group training contracts.

The Board facilitates connections between colleges and universities and resources that provide support services for working or adult students, helping them persist and succeed in their educational pursuits. We are working to ensure these new institutions are integrated to our existing programs. One program that connects workforce and education is PrepareRI a state government initiative that partners with businesses, schools, universities, and non-profits across the state integrating workforce, K-12, and post-secondary education.

3.8 Describe efforts to coordinate supportive services provided through workforce investment activities in the local area, including facilitating transportation for customers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(11)]

GRI provides transportation vouchers, childcare support, and other essential services to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth participants. GRI and its service providers will work closely with federal, state, and local agencies, including Pell Grants, Unemployment Insurance (UI), and other available funding sources, to coordinate these supportive services. The GRI Supportive Service Policy (WIN 15-06) permits program staff to offer supportive services, capping total assistance at \$3,500. As part of a broader policy review, the State Workforce Development Board plans to assess this policy to enhance flexibility and improve access to these services. Recently, the State Board updated a desk guide/asset inventory to identify partners and providers offering services related to workforce development. While not exhaustive, this inventory serves as a starting point to connect WIOA customers with additional resources. The inventory will be regularly updated to ensure frontline staff are aware of all available resources.

GRI aims to support the implementation of a statewide electronic client referral system to help integrate human services, health, education, and career resources, significantly expanding the capabilities of One-Stop staff to connect clients with community services and maintain communication with service providers.

3.9 Based on the analysis described in Section 1.1-1.3, identify the populations that the local area plans to focus its efforts and resources on, also known as targeted populations.

The GRI area is dedicated to strengthening the workforce system's ability to effectively serve the most vulnerable populations. Recognizing that the public workforce system must address the needs of all job seekers, GRI places a particular emphasis on supporting low-income individuals and other underserved groups, including those receiving public assistance, individuals with low basic skills, and communities of color. The Board is committed to providing these populations with access to the necessary resources and training to thrive in the job market. To achieve this, the Board will prioritize expanding community partnerships, particularly through the state's Real Jobs RI program, to better serve the following target groups:

- Displaced homemakers;
- Low-income individuals;
- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians;
- Individuals with disabilities;
- Older individuals (age 55 or older);
- Ex-offenders; Returning citizens or formerly incarcerated;
- Homeless individuals (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6)));
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system;
- Individuals who are English learners, have low literacy levels, or face substantial cultural barriers;
- Eligible Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers as defined in WIOA Sec. 167(i);
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF;
- Single parents (including pregnant women);
- Long-term unemployed individuals; and
- Members of other groups identified by the Governor (WIOA, Sec. 3(24)).

This list is in alignment with the federal definition of populations with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA section 3(24).

3.10 Based on the analysis described Section 1, identify all industries, if any, where the local area plans to engage a targeted sector strategy. This section should align with the industries and businesses identified in the state plan, as well as the priorities outlined in the state's economic development strategy – "Ocean State Accelerates"

GRI has identified key industry sectors that play a critical role in the region's economy, contributing significantly to labor, wages, and investment. These sectors include blue & green economy, infrastructure, and manufacturing.

The Ocean State Accelerates plan list the following goals:

- 1) Strong communities
- 2) Increased prosperity
- 3) Sustainable growth

One of those specific goals that is deeply aligned with the work we are doing in the local area is to expand linkages between K-12, postsecondary education, and industry, and strengthen on-ramps into selected industry sectors. To address the needs of these sectors, GRI is actively strengthening collaborations with industry partnerships supported by the Real Jobs RI program.

We aim to leverage Real Jobs RI as our demand-driven, sector-based program. Through reaching out to priority businesses including the industries that account for a significant portion of our economy, innovative businesses, and businesses that align with the federal investments, we can revamp our Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). GRI will work to diversify high-quality pathways available for adults and youth.

3.11 Based on the analysis described Section 1, describe the local investment strategy toward targeted sectors identified in 3.10 and targeted populations identified in 3.9.

GRI partners with the State's Real Jobs RI program that partners with industry-driven and community partners. Real Jobs partnerships lead recruitment and program design with employer partners who hire at the end of a training.

A recent program developed by the Board also offers Career Exploration Equity Grants to help expand access to high-quality opportunities for youth, and an Experiential Learning Navigator will be launched in 2025 to help expand equitable access to opportunities as well.

We are executing investments in activities that will help connect individuals to high-wage, high-demand opportunities.

3.12 Identify and describe the strategies and services that are and/or will be used to:

- A. Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in workforce development programs (in addition to targeted sector strategies identified in 3.10 and 3.11)
- B. Support a local workforce development system described in 3.2 that meets the needs of businesses.
- C. Better coordinate workforce development programs with economic development partners and programs
- D. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

This may include the implementation of incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, or utilization of effective business intermediaries and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy in 3.1. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4)(A&B)]

- A. The Board will continue focusing on establishing sector partnerships within targeted industries as the foundation for engaging deeply with employers to better understand and meet their needs. Working with employers to create workplaces that adapt to the new populations they recruit whether it's the chronically unemployed, justice involved, or individuals with disabilities. This approach will be supported through close collaboration with the Executive Office of Commerce, where efforts will target small employers by leveraging knowledge sharing and partnerships with regional Chambers of Commerce, the SBA, and other intermediaries.
- B. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), which is the administrative entity housing the Board and GRI, recently launched an Office of Community Engagement (OCE). OCE issued an RFP and engaged with more than twenty (20) community-based organizations to work with on continuous improvement of services and community engagement efforts. This has increased collaboration with partners and has helped us better serve all Rhode Islanders. Employer

engagement through forums, surveys, and site visits will complement our employer strategies within the local workforce system. GRI attends Providence Business News and The Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce events connecting with employers and learning about challenges they are facing.

- C. The collaboration between the Board and the Executive Office of Commerce will be a cornerstone of our strategy, with both parties working closely to align efforts and refine coordination. This partnership is crucial to ensuring that economic development initiatives and workforce development strategies are fully integrated and mutually supportive. The GWB has a liaison to the Commerce Department to ensure continuous collaboration.
- D. Rhode Island's unemployment services are primarily delivered through virtual platforms, with applications and recertifications handled online or via a call center. The Rapid Response team, in conjunction with WIOA adult and dislocated worker staff, will assist with the registration and enrollment of new claimants.

3.13 Does the local board currently leverage or have oversight of funding outside of WIOA Title I funding and state general funds to support the local workforce development system? Briefly describe the funding and how it will impact the local system. If the local board does not currently have oversight of additional funding, does it have future plans to pursue them?

Currently, GRI does not have any funding sources aside from WIOA formula funds. GRI leverages its relationship with DLT and other partners to leverage other programs and resources where available.

3.14 Describe the local area's strategy for community engagement and outreach which may include partnering with community-based organizations, identifying community leaders/champions, and/or working with area school districts to increase the awareness and availability of services beyond the AJC location and within the community. Such strategy may include the strategic co-location of WIOA services within culturally competent organizations with trust and positive reputation within the state's traditionally underserved communities.

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), which is the administrative entity housing the Board and GRI, recently launched an Office of Community Engagement (OCE). OCE issued an RFP and engaged with more than twenty (20) community-based organizations ranging in cultural diversity to work with on continuous improvement of services and community engagement efforts. This has increased collaboration with partners and has helped us better serve all Rhode Islanders. This has served as a network to distribute materials with information on how to access our programs. This group has been used to conduct workshops on programs ranging from WIOA, unemployment claims, and wage theft.

Our Board works closely with RIDE and OPC as well and our latest effort was the development of an Education, Training, and Career Resource Guide for Young Adults which provide a list of programs and services for youth and young adults. We've distributed over 5,000 copies in English and Spanish to libraries, schools, YMCAs, and community centers. The Career Exploration Equity Grant has been utilized by schools and we've have been able to build partnership and increase communication.

Employer engagement through forums, surveys, and site visits complement our employer strategies within the local workforce system. GRI attends Providence Business News and The Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce events connecting with employers and learning about challenges they are facing. Staff of the Board and GRI also regularly attend various community and business events to spread the word about service offerings available.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

Please answer the following questions in Section 4 in eight (8) pages or less. Many of the responses below, such as career pathways and individual training accounts, should be based on strategic discussions with the local board and partners.

4.1 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

GRI has been expanding our focus on individuals with barriers to employment to increase collaboration and align criteria with other programs including but not limited to health and human services and foster youth. The local board has also expanded support services for eligible individuals according to recent training employment guidance letters.

As described in state Workforce Innovation Notice 05-02, 'populations with barriers to employment' include:

- a) Displaced homemakers;
- b) Low-income individuals;
- c) Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians;
- d) Individuals with disabilities;
- e) Older individuals (age 55 or older);
- f) Ex-offenders;
- g) Homeless individuals (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6)));
- h) Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system;
- i) Individuals who are English learners, have low literacy levels, or face substantial cultural barriers;
- j) Eligible Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers as defined in WIOA Sec. 167(i);
- k) Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF;
- l) Single parents (including pregnant women);
- m) Long-term unemployed individuals; and
- n) Members of other groups identified by the Governor (WIOA, Sec. 3(24)).

The state board has considered more expansions based on strategic partnerships to ensure a seamless referral process. The board has increased its reach through our Youth Resource Guide including the American Job Centers and WIOA information. Providing these to local libraries, community-based organizations, and other state and local agencies. This has increased our visibility while also bolstering enrollment and co-enrollment.

In non-WIOA programs such as our Real Jobs program targets re-entry population, existing partnerships will be expanded and leveraged for outreach. These outreach efforts will build on the leadership of partner organizations and be tailored to meet the specific needs, challenges, and preferences of the target populations. It is crucial to ensure that the shift to virtual services does not create new barriers to access for these populations.

4.2 Describe how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable). See Local Plan References and Resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

GRI facilitates the development of career pathways to improve access to activities leading to a recognized

postsecondary credential by analyzing the number of individuals who graduate from our education institutions and comparing it with the jobs available in that field. This is being led by the Governor's office in coordination with our Labor Market Information division. This effort will help guide job seekers to in-demand credentials and education pathways. These education pathways will integrate with existing career pathways, creating a full spectrum of opportunities that are linked together to provide individuals with a smooth connection from education to employment.

By bridging connections between sector partners, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Department of Education we can find gaps in credentials and create more cohesion between colleges, K-12, and employers. Through collaboration with the Public Safety Grant Administrative Office, we will work with employers to enhance Fair Chance Hiring. With the Office of Rehabilitative Services, we will work with employers to enhance the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Through leveraging our one-stop partners community-based organizations, colleges, and K-12 we'll enhance our system so everyone has access to the resources necessary to not only join a career pathway but to be successful in that journey.

The board has worked to promote the registered apprenticeship program. One recent initiative is our Non-Traditional Apprenticeship Expansion Grant which gives organizations money that helps pay for the design and development of new and innovative apprenticeship tracks by providing reimbursement of up to \$25,000. The one-stops have added promotional material for existing registered apprenticeships and plans to continue doing so for newly registered apprenticeships.

4.3 Describe how the local board will utilize co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs to maximize efficiencies and use of resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

Co-enrollment has been one of the main focuses regarding the work to maximize efficiencies and use of resources. We've approved new policy regarding co-enrollment between our Voluntary Extension of Care Program (VEC) for foster youth and WIOA. After a year of meetings with the VEC counselors we've co-enrolled over 50% of the foster youth in their program to WIOA. We've conducted meetings with each WIOA partner separately to discuss their referral processes and the work as described in the MOU. This has helped map out their process and find the best points of entries for co-enrollment. These MOU breakdown meetings have led to a consensus on how we move forward to with co-enrollment across the multiple WIOA partners. It's also led to preliminary conversations about policy changes that'll continue to make co-enrollment easier and more frequently used.

4.4 Describe one-stop delivery system in the local area, consistent with the One-Stop Center Definitions. See Local Plan References and Resources.

- A. Describe the local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, and workers and jobseekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]**

In response to the State Plan, GRI has reviewed the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and created a list of industries that are missing especially considering federal investments in climate, infrastructure, and the CHIPS Act. The Board has also engaged employers from emerging industries, the green economy, and blue economy in efforts to align workforce programming. We've received feedback through customer surveys, in person focus groups, and employer forums, while also meeting jobseekers at the AJCs for feedback.

Utilizing OCE, the Board has increased visibility within marginalized communities.

B. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in remote areas, through the use of technology, and through other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B)]

During COVID-19 GRI moved to virtual services. After re-opening the AJCs, services are now virtual and in-person. Unemployment benefits filings, job matching, resume building, and counseling meetings can all be done virtually. We have upgraded our computer areas in our AJCs and kept our calendar updated on the DLT website listing job fairs, workshops, labor market information, internships, and other service offerings.

The Board conducted a comprehensive survey of individuals who have, haven't, and are currently receiving AJC services. The top challenge was navigating services virtually. It's important that we increase digital literacy to while also increasing visibility for in-person services. With the latest advancements in emerging technology, we are preparing to increase digital literacy to include Artificial Intelligence (AI). After working with Brown University to conduct an analysis on how AI will affect the workforce in Rhode Island we identified the need to increase soft skills including but not limited to communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and leadership.

C. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C)]

GRI's AJCs are accessible for all individuals including ones with disabilities. Our recent renovations ensured our facilities were up to standards as well as accessible. Our current facilities meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding facilities, programs, and services.

- **Availability of Assistive Technology:** To meet the diverse needs of customers with disabilities, all AJCs in the region are equipped with state-of-the-art assistive technology.
- **Facility Accessibility Compliance:** As part of ongoing Local Equal Opportunity monitoring, facilities are routinely evaluated for adherence to the accessibility standards set forth by the ADA, using a comprehensive ADA Self-Assessment Tool.
- **Provision of Accommodations:** In accordance with ADA guidelines, the AJCs ensure that reasonable accommodations are promptly provided to customers upon request, ensuring equal access to services and resources.
- **Staff Training on Disability Services:** New staff members undergo comprehensive training during orientation, focusing on the ADA's requirements for providing accommodations and the effective use of assistive technology, ensuring they are fully prepared to serve customers with disabilities.

GRI and AJCs meet ADA requirements. Sign language interpretation services are readily available for individuals with hearing impairments in compliance with the ADA's mandate for effective communication.

The GWB has also introduced a new small grant program called the Workplace Accessibility Grant, so we are not only working to make our centers accessible for jobseekers, staff, and community members, we are also working to help employers create accessible workplaces for jobseekers with disabilities.

D. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners by providing a summary of the area's memorandum of understanding (and resource sharing agreements if such documents are used). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(D)]

Since 2018, the Greater Workforce Development Board has had a regularly updated MOU with the various partners that make up the One-Stop system. Board staff have conducted one-on-one interviews to support implementing the MOU. The memorandum is up for review and renewal by December 31st, 2026.

E. Describe how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology-enabled intake and case management information system for core programs and programs carried out by one-stop partners [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(21)]

By unifying data systems, agencies can more effectively evaluate outcomes, monitor performance, and continuously improve services. This is vital for meeting WIOA's accountability standards, ensuring that workforce programs deliver measurable results. The Board's core partners do not have an integrated data system but are committed to pursuing alignment and exploring the opportunities of adapting an integrated referral system. Integrated systems can streamline service delivery, reduce redundancies, and enhance the experience for jobseekers. This leads to higher employment rates, better job retention, and improved skill development, all of which align with WIOA's core goals. The role of local workforce boards, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders in this process is crucial.

F. Describe how the local board will promote and expand the use of Registered Apprenticeship as a key work-based learning and occupational training strategy. Describe how the local board will account for the registered apprenticeship structure in the use of OJTs and ITAs.

The Board will cultivate and strengthen partnerships with industry leaders, trade unions, and educational institutions to identify opportunities where Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) can be integrated as a primary pathway for skill development. This includes working with sectors that have a high demand for skilled labor, such as healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology, ensuring that apprenticeships align with current labor market needs.

To expand the use of RAs, the board must conduct targeted outreach to both employers and potential apprentices. This can be achieved through workshops, webinars, and informational sessions that highlight the benefits of RAs, such as the ability to earn while learning, and the long-term career prospects they offer.

Integrating RAs into career exploration programs for youth, as seen with initiatives like the Real Skills for Youth program, can create early exposure and interest in these opportunities.

OJTs can be strategically utilized as a bridge to RAs by allowing participants to gain initial hands-on experience in their chosen field. Employers are encouraged to transition successful OJT participants into RA programs, ensuring a seamless progression from short-term training to long-term career development. The board made policy changes to OJT and ITA to allow RAs to utilize them even when an individual is receiving a wage.

4.5 Describe the policy, process, and criteria for issuing individual training accounts (ITAs) including any limitations on ITA amounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

GRI's policy on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) is designed to ensure that participants receive the necessary training to achieve self-sufficiency and secure employment with in-demand occupations. ITA's are used to

purchase training services from eligible training providers on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). ITA services may be made available to the underemployed and unemployed. Key components are as follows:

Eligibility and Process

- ITAs are available to WIOA Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants who are deemed unable to secure self-sufficient employment through individualized career services alone.
- Eligibility for ITAs is based on an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS), which indicates a need for training and confirms that the participant has the necessary skills to complete the selected program.
- Training must be linked to occupations in demand in the local area or in areas where the participant is willing to relocate.

Coordination with Other Funding Sources

- Participants must seek grant assistance from other sources, such as Federal Pell Grants or the GI Bill, before ITA funds can be used. If other grants do not cover the full cost of training, ITA funds can supplement these sources.
- ITAs can be used while Pell Grant applications are pending, with an agreement in place to allocate any awarded Pell Grant funds to reimburse ITA funds used for tuition.

Funding and Limits

- The ITA monetary limit is set at \$15,000 per participant.
- ITAs are awarded on a per-semester, quarter, term, or continuous training basis.
- Participants may choose training programs from the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

This approach ensures that ITAs are effectively used to support participants in obtaining the necessary skills for employment in high-demand fields while maximizing the use of available financial resources.

4.6 If training contracts are used, describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

If training contracts are available counselors, contractors, and partners shall inform the participant of the training options available ensuring customer choice.

4.7 Describe how the local board plans to integrate and connect training resources, including training contracts, with the work of the state's industry and community-based partnerships such as Real Jobs RI.

To effectively integrate and connect local training resources with the work of Rhode Island's industries and community-based partnerships like Real Jobs RI, the GRI program administrators collaborate with the Real Jobs RI program team daily. The GRI program administrators work within this same office as the Real Jobs RI program administrators and all work under the direction of the Executive Director of the GWB.

4.8 Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. [WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G)(iii)]

The Board conducts a thorough labor market analysis using data from LMI, which provides insights into current and projected job openings in various industries. This analysis is supplemented by direct engagement with industry stakeholders, including employers, industry associations, and sector partnerships such as Real Jobs RI.

These interactions help the board to identify emerging trends, skills gaps, and in-demand occupations that are critical to the local and regional economy.

Based on the insights gathered from labor market analysis and industry engagement, the board prioritizes specific industry sectors that are vital to the local economy. The Real Jobs RI initiative, which is a key component of this strategy, helps to create sector partnerships that bring together employers, educators, and training providers to collaboratively design and implement training programs that address the specific needs of these industries.

Training providers are required to demonstrate that their programs align with the identified in-demand sectors or occupations. Proposals from ETPL applicants are reviewed for alignment with these priority sectors. This review process includes evaluating whether the training programs incorporate the necessary skills, credentials, and certifications that are valued by employers in the targeted industries.

Through these comprehensive steps, the Board that the training provided is closely linked to the real-time needs of the labor market, both locally and beyond, thereby enhancing participants' employment prospects and contributing to regional economic growth.

4.9 Describe how rapid response activities are coordinated and carried out in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8)]

When a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice is issued, or in the event of a significant layoff, the Rapid Response team swiftly mobilizes to support affected employees.

The coordination process begins with the immediate deployment of workforce development staff to the impacted site to conduct on-site informational sessions. These sessions provide critical information about the available support services, including guidance on applying for Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits. Employees are informed about the wide range of resources available to them, such as job search assistance, training opportunities, and career counseling.

The Rapid Response team ensures that affected workers receive information on the America's Job Centers, which offer comprehensive employment services, including workshops on resume writing, interviewing skills, and financial planning. For those needing additional support, the team connects them with specialized services, such as mental health counseling and financial planning.

By coordinating these activities, GRI and DLT ensure that employees facing job loss have immediate access to the necessary tools and resources to transition into new employment opportunities, thereby minimizing the economic impact on the individuals and the community.

4.10 Describe the design framework (such as requirements as described in a Request for Proposals) for youth programs utilized by the local board, and how the required 14 program elements are to be made available within that framework.

Youth services in GRI area are procured through a competitive and transparent Request for Proposals (RFP). This process ensures that selected programs can meet the needs of participating youth by adhering to WIOA requirements. The RFP mandates that funded programs must provide all fourteen (14) WIOA-required youth service elements, either directly, through partnerships with other organizations, or via referrals. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they will ensure that these elements—ranging from education and training to support services—are available to all participating youth as needed.

Programs are required to deliver a comprehensive and individualized sequence of services to ensure compliance with WIOA. This sequence includes:

- Outreach and Recruitment
- Intake and Eligibility Determination
- Assessment and Referral
- Case Management and Individual Service Strategy Development
- Access to a Range of Services
- Follow-Up Services

The RFP emphasizes additional priorities specific to GRI, including:

- A priority is given to programs that effectively engage youth who are out of school or facing significant barriers to employment otherwise known as opportunity youth.
- A priority is given to high-quality work-based learning opportunities. This means programs that offer robust work-based learning experiences, preparing youth for real-world employment are preferred.
- A priority is given to career pathway models. Programs are encouraged to adopt a career pathway approach, helping youth progress through education and training towards higher employment opportunities.
- A priority is given to employer and training Provider partnerships. Applicants must show strong partnerships with employers or training providers, ensuring that youth have access to relevant and high-quality opportunities.
- A priority is given to trauma-responsive services. Programs must incorporate trauma-responsive practices into their design, recognizing and addressing the impact of trauma on the youth they serve.

This framework ensures that the selected youth providers in the GRI area provide comprehensive, individualized, and high-quality services consistent with WIOA's goals and priorities.

4.11 Describe the direction provided to the One Stop operator to ensure that priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E).

The One-Stop operator is directed to ensure that priority for adult career and training services is given to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient, as required by WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E). To facilitate this, the local board has issued a comprehensive priority of service policy, which is provided to the One-Stop operator. This policy includes practical examples of how priority should be applied in various scenarios, ensuring that the operator has clear guidance on implementing these priorities.

To enhance service delivery, the One-Stop operator is actively involved in ongoing conversations between the local board, the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS), and community-based organizations. These discussions focus on increasing access to WIOA services in communities with barriers to employment by leveraging relationships with organizations that have established trust and visibility in these communities. The operator plays a crucial role in both bringing One-Stop services into the community and making the AJCs more welcoming and accessible.

Feedback gathered from these community engagements is shared with the One-Stop operator to inform adjustments in service delivery, making the AJCs more responsive to the needs of public assistance recipients, low-income individuals, and those with basic skills deficiencies. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are

in place to ensure that the priority of service is effectively implemented, with regular reporting and data collection to track the outcomes for these groups. This comprehensive approach ensures that the One-Stop operator not only meets the WIOA requirements but also adapts services to the unique needs of the priority populations through informed, community-based strategies.

4.12 Describe the local board's strategies for ensuring that eligible veterans and covered persons are aware of their entitlement to priority of service, the full array of programs and services available to them, and applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services.

GRI ensures that Veterans and covered persons are informed of their entitlement to priority of service through multiple avenues, including prominently displayed information at AJCs and comprehensive training for all staff.

During intake and throughout their engagement, Veterans are made aware of the full array of programs and services, as well as the eligibility requirements associated with them.

Staff, including Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), are dedicated to ensuring veterans receive tailored assistance, making them a priority across all services.

Additionally, the Real Jobs RI program has a Program Coordinator specifically focused on veteran providers—further strengthening outreach and support for veterans in workforce initiatives.

Section 5: Compliance

Please answer the questions in Section 5 in six (6) pages or less. Most of the response should be staff-driven responses as each are focused on the organization's compliance with federal or state requirements.

5.1 Describe the process for neutral brokerage of adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. Identify the competitive process and criteria (such as targeted services, leverage of funds, etc.) used to award funds to sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services, state the names of contracted organizations, and the duration of each contract. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16)]

GRI relies on the state Department of Labor and Training (DLT) to provide services for both Adult and Dislocated Workers. Given the robust oversight, accountability measures, nondiscrimination requirements, and fiscal controls inherent in a state agency's operations, we are confident that WIOA services for these populations will be delivered with fairness, transparency, and a high standard of quality.

For Youth services, a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process is employed to ensure transparency and openness. The RFP stipulates that funded programs must provide access to all 14 elements of youth services required under WIOA, either directly, through partnerships with other organizations (whether WIOA-funded or not), or by referral.

These are the following WIOA Youth Providers:

Organization	Start Date	End Date
Community Care Alliance	July 01, 2024	June 30, 2025
Comprehensive Community Action Program	July 01, 2024	June 30, 2025
East Bay Community Action Program	July 01, 2024	June 30, 2025
Foster Forward	July 01, 2024	June 30, 2025
Tri County Community Action Program	July 01, 2024	June 30, 2025

5.2 Identify the One-Stop Operator and describe the established procedures for ongoing certification of one-stop operators.

The current One-Stop Operator is The Workplace [350 Fairfield Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06604].

Pursuant to local policy L02-01 One Stop Certification occurs at least every three years. The most recent certification was conducted in June 2022.

The team that conducts the certification is made up of members of the Local Area Advisory Committee. The members are provided worksheets to allow them to conduct an objective evaluation of the two AJCs.

Once the evaluation is complete, the results are shared with the full Local Area Advisory Committee and GWB.

5.3 Provide an organization chart as Attachment A that depicts a clear separation of duties between the board and service provision.

Please see Attachment A.

5.4 Provide a complete list of Local Board Membership Roster, including titles and professional associations.

Please see Attachment B.

5.5 Provide the policy and process for nomination and appointment of board members.

Under Rhode Island General Laws 42-102-2, the Governor’s Workforce Board (acting as the Local Board for the GRI area under a waiver granted by the U.S. Secretary of Labor) is appointed by the Governor of Rhode Island, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Governor has full discretion in making nominations.

As part of the waiver conditions allowing the State Board to serve as the Local Board, the Governor’s Workforce Board has established a Local Area Advisory Committee to address local business. This Committee plays a crucial role in engaging with local partners and gathering feedback from GRI.

Appointments to the Advisory Committee are made at the discretion of the Board Chair, however, in accordance with an agreement with the Chief Local Elected Officials of the GRI area, nominations for at least half of the Committee’s members are submitted by local elected officials, facilitated through the League of Cities and Towns. The remaining members are selected to represent the interests of business, community, families, and labor within the region.

5.6 Provide the name, organization, and contact information of the designated equal opportunity officer for WIOA within the local area.

Corey Jones is the Local Equal Opportunity Officer for GRI:

Corey Jones
Equal Opportunity Officer
GRI Workforce Development Area
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Building 73-1
Cranston, RI 02920
401-462-8887
Corey.D.Jones@dlt.ri.gov

5.7 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15)]

GRI utilizes the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training for disbursement of grant funds:

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

5.8 Indicate the most recent negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

The State’s negotiated levels of performance for PY 2024 and PY 2025 for each of the core programs under WIOA sec. 116(b)(3)(A)(iv)(I), are published in the Combined State Plan. The negotiated levels are provided in the table below:

WIOA Performance Measures Rhode Island Final Negotiated Goals	PY 24	PY 25
WIOA Adults		
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	82.50%	83.00%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	80.50%	81.50%
Median Earnings	7,500.00	\$8,100.00
Credential Attainment Rate	59.00%	60.50%
Measurable Skill Gains	47.50%	48.00%
WIOA Dislocated Workers		
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	86.00%	86.50%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	84.50%	85.50%
Median Earnings	\$9,500.00	\$9,750.00
Credential Attainment Rate	71.50%	72.00%
Measurable Skill Gains	44.00%	44.50%
WIOA Youth		
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	73.00%	73.50%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	71.00%	71.50%
Median Earnings	3,750.00	\$ 4,000.00
Credential Attainment Rate	63.00%	63.50%
Measurable Skill Gains	39.00%	40.50%

5.10 Describe indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training serves as the fiscal agent for GRI. This role requires compliance with all federal rules and regulations applicable to recipients of federal funds, it also ensures adherence to the rules and regulations of the State of Rhode Island. This includes those related to procurement, invoice processing, and payroll.

All financial transactions for GRI are recorded in the Department's Financial Accounting and Reporting System (FARS), which is audited annually and forms the basis for all federal financial reports.

In terms of service provider performance and the operation of the One-Stop system, the Board plans to collaborate with the One-Stop Operator to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics. These may include case progression, enrollments and completions, customer satisfaction reports, and other critical measures to track and evaluate the performance of the One-Stop system and its partners.

5.11 Provide a description of the replicated cooperative agreements, as defined by WIOA 107(d)(11), in place between the local board and the Department of Human Services' Office of Rehabilitation Services with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts of cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)]

GRI provided the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at coordinating and aligning their programs and services. Under this MOU, ORS has committed to facilitating access to its services and programs to ensure that the needs of job seekers, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, including those with disabilities, are met. This includes ensuring access to technology and materials. Both parties also agree to establish a cross-referral process, contingent on the availability of funding, services, and program needs, to ensure that high-quality and convenient services are accessible to potential customers of the career center system. Furthermore, ORS has agreed to collaborate on funding the infrastructure costs of the career centers, as well as the shared services and operating costs, in accordance with state requirements.

5.12 Describe the process for getting input into the development of the local plan in compliance with WIOA section 108(d) and providing (minimum 30 day) public comment opportunity prior to submission. Be sure to address how members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education were given an opportunity to provide comments on the local plans. If any comments were received that represent disagreement with the plan, please include those comments here. See Local Plan References and Resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)]

Through a focus group with Youth participants, an employer forum, and directly speaking to jobseekers at the AJCs, we collected feedback on how we can make our services more accessible. The most common piece of feedback was increasing visibility through advertisements of services.

(Add information on the public comment period)