PROPOSED SECTION REVISIONS

ADULT, DISLCOATED WORKER, AND YOUTH PROGRAM ELEMENTS

STRATEGY, VISION, and OVERALL PROGRAMMING UPDATES

RI Department of Labor and Training

Governor’s Workforce Board
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**WIOA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

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

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

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

An analysis of the workforce development system of Rhode Island revealed that many strong initiatives are available in Rhode Island, however such initiatives are often unconnected and lack a coordinated focus. In response Rhode Island has chosen to use the opportunity provided by the WIOA combined planning process to implement a demand driven sector strategy full scale. Building on the successful piloted demand strategies already underway in the state, Rhode Island seeks to align the entire workforce development network to this demand driven strategy.
In doing so, Rhode Island workforce development partners will be better equipped to serve those Rhode Islanders in the greatest need. Using the actionable intelligence gathered through the sector strategy which uses workforce intermediaries to aggregate demand, the partnering programs will be better poised to provide services in context with occupational attainment or advancement. Rhode Island’s economy cannot afford to leave the talent of any citizen untapped and will implement a career pathway strategy that provides the client perspective to the demand strategy. The career pathway strategy aims to help individual citizens of the state become more competitive in the labor market and better able to obtain employment in the industries driving the state’s economy.

**STRATEGIC ELEMENTS**

**Rhode Island State Vision**

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

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

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

> “the interaction of human, organizational and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of associations among them and between them and the broader systems of which the community is part.”
In order to maximize Rhode Island’s community capacity, individuals have to be aware of the opportunities present, but they must also be cognizant of their own ability to seize those opportunities. These opportunities represent the options a person has to better their life and benefit their communities at large. The more people seize these opportunities, the more community capacity is generated. As community capacity expands, the more competitive a community becomes which increases the number of opportunities available to the community and its citizens. Markets grow when there is healthy competition forcing them to expand, the same idea can be applied to workforce opportunities. Community capacity can be measured by comparing available opportunities and the ability of community members to seize said opportunities while contending with the barriers they encounter. By increasing available opportunities, whether it be the availability of jobs or training interventions to employment, and creating better mechanisms for individuals to realize their own capacity to seize opportunities through the services of diverse programs. Within our state we can create more economic competition through collective advancement.

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

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

The guiding strategies of this plan include:

1. Implementing a demand-driven sector-based strategy to aggregate economic opportunities by employers and their intermediaries

2. A career pathway strategy to provide employment, education, training and support services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, so they can
improve own individual capacity to effectively compete in the labor market to achieve economic security for themselves and their families.

3. Develop an effective performance measurement strategy to track labor market interactions beyond federal reporting requirements

To accomplish the statewide vision of maximizing the talents of all Rhode Islanders to meet the labor demand of employers, Rhode Island will utilize a demand driven sector strategy to aggregate the demands of employers by developing industry based sector partnerships and leveraging workforce intermediaries in each sector. To develop the talent of individuals, the State of Rhode Island will use the career pathway strategy and the expertise of the provider network to develop individual plans of service that provide intensive individual attention and provide the combination of services that provides the greatest competitive advantage to the individual when competing in the labor market.

**Demand Driven Sector Strategy:**

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

Rhode Island’s state workforce board recognized the need to develop the capacity of workforce intermediaries and used state funding to support industry partnership grants. Building on the success of this initiative, Rhode Island under WIOA seeks to bring the workforce intermediary strategy to scale in all target industry clusters and to use all programs included in this plan to support this effort. This sectoral approach, the most ambitious according to Giloth, will develop workforce solutions that address connecting the labor supply to the workforce demand across employers in an industry cluster. By taking a sector approach to growing workforce intermediaries, Rhode Island will be able to align across industry, demand-based workforce solutions to the statewide economic development initiatives in the same industry clusters. In addition, sectoral workforce intermediaries will be able to provide higher quality actionable intelligence that policymakers can use to better leverage public resources for the success of Rhode Island’s workforce members and employers.
The purpose of the sector based strategy and the use of workforce intermediaries is twofold. First, this strategy provides a structured way for employers within the same sector to collaborate to generate solutions for shared problems. Finding enough workers with the skills needed to supply the labor necessary to produce goods and services is one of the most critical issues facing employers and the reason why a sector strategy is needed to promote workforce development. The use of intermediaries allows employers the ability to collaborate through a third party so that the natural competition of employers doesn’t hinder the industry’s ability to develop solutions to common challenges that, if met, would benefit all employers in an industry. In addition, the structured collaboration managed through the intermediary helps employers to think critically about their workforce needs and then helps employers articulate those needs in a way that the workforce network can respond to.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Industry-based partnerships with employers as the primary participants invert the common method of employer engagement. Rather than have employers participate in a service provider developed program, service providers are invited to participate in an employer led workforce development program. Employers determine what level of intervention they are willing to support when it comes to preparing future employees. In addition, employers choose which service providers they want to collaborate with in delivering the workforce solution developed. The freedom of partnerships to control their own membership allows existing collaborations to be supported and creates a healthy competition for those organizations, both employer and nonemployer, looking to join the partnership. Employers looking to join the partnership must be willing to collaborate with the other employers and commit to the workforce solution developed. Service providers seeking to become partnership members directly must demonstrate their value to the employers and must provide services that fit the proposed solution strategy. Depending on the level of intervention included in the workforce solution, some service providers may provide services as part of the industry-based training program, whereas other service providers may not be directly involved in the partnership but may align their pre-industry training services to the partnership’s program.

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

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

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

In addition to having direct access to employers, the workforce intermediary strategy provides diverse entities the opportunity to develop customized programs and service delivery methods for the intermediary’s workforce plan. This ability gives the diverse entities a way to develop solutions that do not need to be system-wide changes. Many diverse entities have experienced pressure to make system-wide changes in response to employer needs. Such large scale projects, such as developing CTE curriculum or drafting elements of an adult education provider contract, hinder the entity’s ability to engage in customized solutions development. A sector-based training program may not require education reform or to different statewide regulations changes around service delivery and the demand captured by the partnership may not represent a large enough or long-term type of employer demand to justify legacy system changes. Yet just because employer needs for workforce talent may not warrant a system-wide change, the demand for those workers is real and diverse entities are needed by employers to find and retain those workers. The recognition of the need for diverse entities to participate in the workforce intermediary helps those entities connect client serving programs to the workforce solutions. The new workers required by employers must come from the client pools served by diverse entities, however, by working through workforce intermediaries the expertise of employers and diverse entities are brought together in an official capacity to solve workforce shortages and connect clients to open positions.

As partnerships form and the results of workforce solution plans are generated, best practices will emerge. While each partnership responds to the unique demands of its employer members, a community of learning will develop among partnerships, helping employers to better articulate their needs and match those needs to the appropriate service provider, helping service providers to better respond to the needs of employers in a meaningful way and more effectively serve their clients. In addition, grant advisors and other government staff can begin to solve practical challenges facing partnerships and can refine workforce, economic, and education policy to further support the efforts of the partnerships.
Another benefit of bringing employers and service providers together in industry-based partnerships is employers will learn how to better signal their workforce needs to trigger the appropriate response from the government and non-government workforce organizations. Translating the real time talent needs of an employer into a recruitment or application qualifications often results in a misalignment of the skills of potential candidates to the skills required at the production level or a shortage of qualified candidates responding to a recruitment. For example, education credentials are often required by employers more as a means to measure an individual’s reliability rather than their academic skills. However, if a six week “boot camp” or similar program can demonstrate to an employer in real-time the reliability of a candidate than the employer may hire the individual with more confidence in the long-term success of the individual while the individual is spared having to overcome the barrier of having an academic credential before being qualified to gain employment. By working together, employers and service providers can produce a more accurate descriptions of what skills employers are looking for and how to find or develop those skills in the pool of available workers.

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

As workforce intermediaries begin to work with employers in a more comprehensive way, the government programs and the diverse entities participating in the intermediary will be able to develop investment strategies that braid multiple resources and funding sources together to support the planned workforce solution. Participating programs can add resources to aspects of the workforce plan that align with the program mission and goals. By looking to create a comprehensive strategy and investment plan, the intermediary will be able to attract more resources for its employer partners and their future workers. Participating programs receive better placement and retention of clients within the employer community and receive a more transparent account of how funds are used to support activities. This transparency not only allows for more effective investment, but will help prevent programs duplicating efforts and funding.
As partnerships begin to develop comprehensive workforce strategies and use the investments supporting the strategy, the larger workforce related programs, including all programs contained in this plan, will be able to analyze the trend of these workforce solutions and create more informed policy and investment decisions to improve the function and collaboration of workforce network entities. As the workforce intermediaries grow in capacity and organize more of the employer demand for workforce, the larger workforce related programs will align with each other to ensure greater connections to industry partners and to scale up existing efforts to complement the increased capacity of the intermediaries. This relationship creates a sustainable cycle of improving program alignment with aggregated demand where employer participation in intermediary partnerships increases the information available regarding employer demand to diverse entities, who are able to respond more effectively to employer demand.

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

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

**Career Pathway Strategy:**

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

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

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

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

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

- Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles
- Identify sectors and industry and engage employers
- Design programs that meet the skill needs of high demand industries
- Identify funding needs and sources
- Align policies and programs
- Measure system change and performance
When employing the career pathway strategy that includes these elements, Rhode Island aligns with the definition of career pathway provided by WIOA. A career pathway is defined by WIOA Sec. 3 (7.) as:

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

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

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

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

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

By having the client complete a goal setting and needs assessment exercise, the service provider can determine what referrals should be made to connect the individual with additional resources and subject matter experts that can further help provide direction and assistance to the individual. For example, a client who is finishing an adult education program and has obtained a GED may be looking to participate in a sector-based training program. The adult education provider may refer the individual to the American Job Center where the individual can be connected to the workforce intermediary providing the sector-based training program, who in turn may connect the individual to the financial aid office of the local community college if college coursework is an element of the training program. This approach recognizes that no single entity has all the information a client may need and that the comprehensive career pathway planning will need multiple contributors who will help bridge the client’s current situation to the next step in connecting the client to the next area of information or service. Again, a collaborative network government approach will allow entities in the workforce network to remain true to their core missions while assisting the client to connect to the services and resources needed.
Such opportunities and resources will be combined in such a way as to maximize the individual’s competitiveness so they can successfully compete to achieve their career goals. This career pathway strategy will be used for WIOA clients initially, however, this tool can be adopted in other programs including, secondary and post-secondary institutions. Because career pathway planning reflects the individual’s specific goals and needs, the appropriate combination of services is not limited and can be used for any population. In addition to being versatile for different client types, this plan can also be used to coordinate service delivery across programs and service providers.

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

Career Pathway Planning for youth goes beyond the connection to the K-12 system and will include all programs and services necessary to assist the youth participating achieve their education and career goals. The career planning for participating youth should address all elements that effect their ability to meet their career and educational goals. Such elements include leveraging activates to support the success of youth populations with disabilities, such as those provided in partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services, while the youth pursue both the educational and career goals. In addition, the provisions of adult education for youth who are not attending school and who have not attained an equivalency credential will be included in the planning process. Ensuring those youth who receive TANF services are included in this planning is also imperative to the success of this strategy. This work is already underway in the Community Action Plans (CAP) that operate the youth centers around the state. Such inclusionary practices go beyond the scope of this plan to include other services outside those directly connected to career and education activities such as medical care. Overall, the career pathway strategy intends to eliminate silos among core programs and coordinate the services available to the youth in a way that is centered around helping the individuals meet their own goals. Such efforts will require the day to day collaboration of programs and partner staff across organizations both governmental and non-governmental. The mechanisms to be used to foster such collaboration are described in the implementation section.
An example of such alignment can be seen through the relationship of the Title I and Title II adult education literacy programs. This example illustrates how core and combined programs should identify services can be delivered in tandem to maximize the resources available to participant. For older youth over the age of 18, the career pathway plan should include those additional services provided under Title I for youth, such as activities leading to a high school diploma, high school diploma equivalency, or post-secondary credential, as well as additional services provided for Adult workers. Training services available to Adult and Dislocated Workers under Title 1 may be used for qualifying older youth. Career pathway planning for an older youth may span a longer timeframe and may include additional milestones than a similar plan for an Adult or Dislocated Worker. For example, an out-of-school youth may need job experience services funded under Youth services which may lead to a placement requiring additional support provided under the Adult and Dislocated Worker Training services. Such a transition may include a Youth summer internship that becomes the need for On-the-Job Training once the Youth is hired into a permanent position. Similar coordination should be taken among all core and combined programs.

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

The Office of Rehabilitation (ORS) has an extensive infrastructure in place with the Rhode Island Department of Education a (RIDE) and every local education authority (LEA) to provide transition services to in-school youth with disabilities. The intent of this partnership is to ensure that youth with disabilities have an opportunity to experience career exploration, real work experiences and a plan for employment after high school. Through a Cooperative Agreement between RIDE and ORS, a Master’s-level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor from ORS works with every high school in the state of RI to provide technical assistance, case consultation, and function as a referral source. Referrals to ORS occur while youth are still in high school so assessments, community-based work experiences, and transition planning can occur prior to graduation. This relationship between youth and ORS prior to graduation creates a link for youth to the world of adult services and ongoing movement toward employment. Additionally, ORS through this partnership with RIDE, is well equipped to provide the following WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services to youth with disabilities who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan, regardless of application status: Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning, Counseling on
Opportunities for Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs, Workplace Readiness Training, and Self-Advocacy.

**College and Career Focus**

Since the initial issuance and submission of this state plan, Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo announced an ambitious goal to ensure that 70% of working-aged Rhode Islanders hold some form of post-secondary credential by the year 2025. Based on national data as well as state labor market projections, the Governor found that nearly seven out of ten jobs created in Rhode Island over the next decade will require more than a high school diploma. Reaching this ambitious goal will require an ‘all hands on deck’ effort, and WIOA clients such as adult learners and job seekers will be an essential area of focus.

As mentioned previously, Rhode Island’s career pathways strategy takes an individualized approach to career services that will be built around whatever strategies are most effective in helping the client meet their own career goals. In some cases, a client may have some post-secondary education but no degree – completing their education and securing that degree may be part of their personal and professional goals. Although WIOA does not prioritize college degree completion as a direct goal, we nonetheless recognize the value of college completion to an individuals’ employability and to the overall economy, as well as the critical role that WIOA could play in helping customers meet their aspirations.

A key lever to help advance this workforce and economic imperative will be the state’s Eligible Training Provider List. Rhode Island will review present ETPL policies and practices to better support college completion. Customer choice is paramount, and any policies and activities related to this strategic priority would focus on expanding options and opportunities for clients. Institutes for higher education will be encouraged to place for-credit courses and degree programs on the ETPL alongside their non-credit offerings. Any such degrees will need to be in high demand and/or high wage fields, but experience tells us that the potential degrees that serve as a pathway to such fields can be quite diverse. If an individual job seeker who is a near-completer is interested in finishing their education within such a field, and if said individual is determined eligible for the Individual Training Account program; an ITA account can be opened specifically for the amount of credits the individual needs, alongside any eligible FAFSA assistance and/or Pell Grants.

**Performance Measurement Strategy:**

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

The primary indicators of WIOA for core programs miss their intended mark and do not provide for the reporting of the programs in a comprehensive way. The primary indicators include recordings of how many participants enroll and finish the program, their employment status six months and a year after exiting the program, their annual salaries after six months and a year after exiting the program, and whether or not they have obtained post-secondary diplomas or certificates after leaving a WIOA funded program. Rhode Island has operationalized these measures in a formal Performance Accountability Policy and has also selected “Retention with the same employer” and “Employer Penetration Rate” as our measures of Employer Effectiveness. With the State Workforce Board as thought-leader, Rhode Island plans to enhance the use and analysis of these indicators to better inform program design; however, the amount of information that can be extracted from these indicators is somewhat limited.

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

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

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

Such measures do not provide enough information to decision makers about the effectiveness of a program. Therefore, Rhode Island will develop outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of both individual programs and the strategies outlined in this plan to supplement the output measures required by WIOA. Outcome measures will be used to analyze the comprehensive effect of a program, and more broadly the workforce network as a whole. While individual outputs can track the efficiency of individual program elements, outcome measures will assess the overall quality of change experienced by program participants and employer partners.

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

The mechanism for developing such comprehensive measures already exists; Rhode Island’s GWB under state law is responsible for gathering and distributing information from, and to, all agencies, departments, and councils within the coordinated-programs system. The board’s duties also include maintaining a comprehensive inventory and analysis of workforce development activities in the state to support the biennial statewide employment and training plan. This collection of data provided to the GWB through programs like RJRI allow the board to make comprehensive decisions about broader economic growth. Recording general output measurements alone may provide an unclear picture of the effectiveness of workforce service interventions.
Rhode Island’s Department of Labor and Training has begun this work in collaboration with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab by developing the Real Jobs RI project that will utilize robust outcome based metrics that paint a complete picture of the program’s effectiveness in creating success for program sector partners and training participants alike. The work underway for this program provides a detailed example of the type of outcome based performance measurement Rhode Island seeks to create to more accurately measure the effectiveness of the strategies of this plan. These measurements aim to keep track of every level of the training process and all parties involved; the RIDLT will create reports for the following:

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

On an individual participant level, the measurements that the RI DLT will use in The Real Jobs Rhode Island program will allow the agency to accurately gauge the programs effect on creating upward mobility for participants. Understanding a participant’s background is imperative to knowing the possible barriers to employment and how to address them. These metrics also allow the department to follow individuals more closely on their advancement into the field they train for. Recording a participants pre-training wage gives the DLT and the GWB a standpoint in which to measure programs efficacy on these factors and allows the agency to compare them to post-training wages. This also gives a broader understanding of how programs affect the Rhode Island workforce as a whole.

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

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

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

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

Although WIOA does not mandate such rigorous measurement requirements, Rhode Island believes proper and precise outcome based metrics lead to a greater understanding of how programs affect our state’s economy. Real Jobs Rhode Island is based on aligning agency and program goals with these new performance metrics. Rhode Island will take the comprehensive performance measurement structure developed for RJRI to scale, by adding additional outcome measures for all programs included in this plan.

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

By using evidence based outcomes the state can gather real-time information on what aspects of services and programs are effective in employment interventions which, in turn, will affect funding allocation. By taking the initiative through RJRI Rhode Island will be the example of a laboratory of democracy that other states can use as an example in creating new workforce development programs. When developing comprehensive outcome measures for WIOA partner programs the state of Rhode Island will convene subject matter experts both government and non-government to develop the measures with support from Harvard’s
Kennedy School of Government Performance Lab. Outcome measures for the six core programs will be developed over the next year, followed by the combined partner programs. Outcome measures for all programs should be complete by the midpoint of this plan.
Table 1. This page lays out the states expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYMENT (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2018</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Workers</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (Education, Training, or employment)</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner-Peyser</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Rehab</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYMENT (FOURTH QUARTER AFTER EXIT)</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2018</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner-Peyser</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIAN EARNINGS (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2018</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>$5,800</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Workers</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner-Peyser</td>
<td>$5,122</td>
<td>$5,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2018</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Workers</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner-Peyser</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASURABLE SKILLS GAINS</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2018</th>
<th>Proposed/Expected PY 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated workers</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
<td>BASELINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner-Peyser</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 Expected Levels of Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFFECTIVENESS SERVING EMPLOYERS</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention with the same employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Penetration Rate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Economic and Workforce Analysis of Rhode Island**

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

Historically, Rhode Island’s economy relied heavily on manufacturing. Jewelry, toy and textile manufacturing that were only moderately advanced made up a large portion of the manufacturing base, and were vulnerable to offshoring. While total advanced industry employment has declined at the fastest rate in the nation from 1980 (134,500 jobs) to 2013 (68,600 jobs), Rhode Island’s advanced business service output and employment growth was the highest in New England from 2010 to 2013. Advanced business services include services modern corporations rely on for back-office and headquarter operations such as web services, data processing, marketing, client management, human resources, financial services, and strategy and product development support. However, growth in advanced business services has only partially offset the decline of the manufacturing base. Advanced business services has only added about 12,000 jobs since 1980, making up for a small
fraction of the 50,000 jobs lost in manufacturing\textsuperscript{1}. It is a bleak picture, but one that can be changed if Rhode Island focuses on making sure workers have the skills they need to succeed in industries that will grow the economy.

**Economic Analysis of Rhode Island**

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

**Industry Analysis**

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

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

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

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


\textsuperscript{2} Battelle Et Al. (2016) Page 38
Core Competencies

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

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

An additional analysis assessed Rhode Island’s position in relation to technology deployment across two measures: value added per employee and capacity to generate good jobs. Higher value added signify that an industry is more competitive, while a good job is defined as offering a livable wage with benefits for full-time workers who have less than a four-year degree. Five industry clusters exceeded the national level of value added per worker, which means that Brookings expects these five to expand their market share. These clusters are defense shipbuilding and maritime; design, materials, food, and custom manufacturing; advanced business services; transportation, shipping, and logistics; and, arts, education, hospitality, and tourism. Six of the clusters employ a significant share of their workforce in good jobs: marine, materials, and machinery; health and life sciences; instruments, electronics, and defense; advanced business services; software systems and internet; and, transportation, distribution, and logistics. In Rhode Island, 230 occupations are considered good jobs, accounting for 27% of employment in 2014.

High-Growth Industries for Economic Growth

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

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1 Battelle Et All (2016) Page 46.
This analysis outlined five high-value advanced industry growth areas and two opportunity industry growth areas that produce larger numbers of good jobs to focus on to put Rhode Island’s economy back on course. The five advanced industry growth areas are: biomedical innovation; IT/software, cyber-physical systems and data analytics; defense shipbuilding and maritime; advanced business services; and, design, food and custom manufacturing. The two opportunity industry growth areas are transportation, distribution, and logistics; and, arts, education, hospitality and tourism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When it comes to the regional concentrations of labor throughout the state, almost half of Rhode Island’s jobs are concentrated in the Providence, Cranston and Warwick communities. One quarter of the state’s employment is located in Providence alone. Pawtucket and East Providence together contain another 10 percent of employment. This concentration of employment in a few communities points to the importance of accessible

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1 Battelle Et All. (2016) Page 8
2 Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island, Biennial Employment & Training Plan FY2014 and FY2015
3 Industry by Occupation Tables, Labor Market Information, August 2012
4 Building Futures Skills Gap Study [2012]
transportation to work for both employers and workers, especially for those with disabilities and significant barriers to unemployment.

**Workforce Analysis**

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

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

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

The current working-age population is nationally competitive, but is behind that of the New England educational attainment rate. Rhode Island ranks sixth of six states in New England with regard to percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree and fifth on number of people with a graduate or professional degree. The State has strong job growth in high-skill jobs requiring at least a bachelor’s degree and middle-skill jobs requiring some postsecondary credential/associate’s degree. Analysis by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that, by 2020, over seven out of ten jobs in Rhode Island will require some form of postsecondary education. Yet Rhode Island, when compared to the national average, has struggled to maintain and grow the educational attainment of its residents. “In sum, Rhode Island’s residents were barely more educated in 2014 than they were in 2009, and actually less educated in terms of the share of the population with only a bachelor’s degree.” This will create a shortage of labor supply for Rhode Island businesses. This is particularly acute in computer programming and coding jobs, which have seen thousands of openings each year in Rhode Island. The number of occupations requiring STEAM degrees is growing in the state, but Rhode Island produces the lowest or almost lowest number of STEAM degrees among its benchmark states and in the region.

The study by Battelle et al. (2016) also finds that Rhode Island does not have the near-term or future talent pool necessary to fill jobs in technical fields in identified growth areas. Students are not prepared to enter STEAM careers, showing a lack of proficiency in science

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7 Battelle Et Al. (2016) P. 97  
8 Rhode Island Governor’s Workforce Board. (2016, January). Comprehensive System Improvement Plan For Workforce Development in Rhode Island.  
9 Battelle Et Al. (2016) Page 68  
11 Battelle Et al. (2016) page 99
and math. Students are not being introduced to computer science and coding, which offer pathways to jobs in high-value advanced industries. Only 72 students took the AP computer science exam in 2014-2015, with many students only taking a basic computer literacy class to fulfill the technology graduation requirement.

**Workforce Snapshot**

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

For Rhode Island’s students of color and those from low-income households, math proficiency challenges are especially acute. Among eighth graders, 41 percent of white students but just 13 percent of Hispanic students, 14 percent of black students, and 15 percent of low-income students scored at proficiency on the math portion of the NAEP in 2015. Among fourth graders, 48 percent of white children were proficient, compared to 18 percent of Hispanic students, 17 percent of black students, and 21 percent of low-income students. These are disturbing numbers for the state’s economic future given that 30 percent of the state’s PK-12 population is Hispanic or black and 46 percent are low income. As Baby Boomers retire it is far from clear that the state’s future workforce will be ready to fill their jobs in critical advanced industries, let alone support sector expansion. (p. 101102)

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

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

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

The trends of immigration in Rhode Island are represented in overall census demographic data. In 2000 the population of Rhode Island was 1,048,319; in 2010 this increased to 1,052,567- a relatively small change but there is a larger story to be told about this sum. Between 2000 and 2010 white/Caucasian residents declined 3.9 percent, from 891,191 in 2000 to 856,869 while African American and Latino populations increased dramatically. The African American population rose from 46,908 to 60,189- a 28.3% increase. Additionally, Latinos saw an even larger increase than African Americans; the population of Latinos and/or Hispanics in Rhode Island jumped from 90,820 to 130,655- an overall increase of 43.9%. Asian populations also saw a 28.7% increase, while other minorities such as Native Americans (+18% increase) also saw boosts in numbers.

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

The Office of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Program continues to serve Rhode Islanders with disabilities in increasing numbers. In FFY2017, the VR Program provided services to over 7,500 individuals with disabilities. Additionally, 2,173 individuals completed applications for services; and 703 individuals successfully obtained and maintained employment consistent with their abilities, interests and informed choice. In addition to serving increased numbers of individuals with significant disabilities, the VR Program continues to outreach to un-served and underserved populations. In particular, this includes individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds; veterans returning from war; and individuals with learning disabilities served through the federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program (in Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Works Program (RIWorks)). The VR Program is strongly focused on outreach and services for youth that are in transition from school to self-sufficiency in adult life through employment, develop advocacy and leadership skills for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities in Rhode Island. ORS is looking to expand services to eligible individuals with disabilities through Innovation and Expansion (I & E) activities.

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

The comprehensive system improvement plan created by the Governor’s Workforce Board reinforces the need for preparing and upskilling workers. Projected job growth in Rhode Island through 2022 suggests that 36% of all jobs in the state will require at least some college, and another 30% of jobs will require some type of post-secondary education. However, 42% of Rhode Islanders will not have any type of post-secondary education – and there will only be about 33% of jobs available to workers with only a high school diploma.\(^{12}\)

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

Rhode Island’s December 2015 unemployment rate dropped to 5.1%, down from 6.8% in December 2014 and from a peak of 11.3% during the Recession in summer 2009.\(^{14}\) This decrease in the unemployment rate moves Rhode Island closer to the national average, but this is not just due to job gains. Rhode Island’s workforce is shrinking, partly due to retiring Baby Boomers.

A report by the Economic Progress Institute (2015) found that Rhode Island must add 12,700 additional jobs to regain jobs that were lost during the recession and keep up with population growth. The state is close to prerecession levels – 1,600 jobs short – but needs to continue to grow to keep up with projected population growth.\(^{13}\)

The Economic Progress Institute (2015) breaks down unemployment data by race and ethnicity, painting a different overall picture of the unemployment rate in Rhode Island. In 2014, the average unemployment rate was 7.7%, which was tied for the highest overall unemployment rate in the nation. When the unemployment rate is looked at by demographics that number changes drastically. In 2014, the White unemployment rate was

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


6.2%, compared to 11.5% for Black workers and 16.2% for Latino workers. The highest White unemployment rate, 9.7% in 2009, was almost lower than the lowest minority unemployment rates. The data shows that Latino workers had a lower unemployment rate than 9.7% prior to 2008.

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

According to the RIDLT Labor Market Information’s 2022 industry Outlook Report Rhode Island employment is expected to increase by more than 51,000 jobs during the 2012-2022 projection period as the state’s economy continues to recover from recessionary losses. Employment in 2022 is projected to reach 545,550 an increase of 51,420 (10.4%) job from the 2012 employment level. Much of this growth is attributed to the increased demand for the products and services provided by the Health Care & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Administrative & Waste Services; Construction and Manufacturing sectors. Nationally employment is projected to increase by 10.8 percent. The largest numeric gains will continue to occur in the Health Care & Social Assistance sector. This sector is expected to account for 17 percent of the new job growth expected in the state during the 2012-2022 projection period. Increasing coverage, medical advances along with an aging population will result in an increase of 13,852 (+17.2%) jobs. The Construction sector is projected to grow at the fastest rate (26.6 %) during the 2012 -2022 projection period. Prior to the recession, employment in this sector averaged 22,000 jobs. The projected growth of over 4,000 jobs will bring our construction industry close to its pre-recession levels.

**Rhode Island’s Consent Decree**

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the State of Rhode Island entered into an agreement to give approximately 3,400 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) the option of integrated day and employment services. Prior to the agreement, only 12% of individuals were in individualized, integrated employment. In the latest court monitor report, the State has not met its benchmarks for fulfilling the agreement (Moseley, 2017).

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

While the consent decree represents one population of individuals with disabilities (i.e., IDD) there are other underserved disability populations that will require adequate training and employment opportunities to populations with disabilities, in the future Rhode Island will ensure that this issue is addressed more broadly beyond the consent decree. The State is actively working to address the needs of those with physical, emotional, developmental or other disabilities as an Employment First state, which articulates a commitment to all individuals, regardless of type of disability, to have the same access to integrated competitive employment opportunities afforded to non-disabled adults and youths.

The Rhode Island employment rate of individuals with disabilities, especially those with IDD, has improved in recent years; it remains one of the highest in the nation at 9% and is the highest among the New England region. Information obtained from the Disability Employment Policy Resource by Topic in January of 2013; 16-19 year old with a disability were employed at a rate of 12.7% in comparison to non-disabled youth which were employed at a rate of 24.9%. Additionally, for youth ages 20-24 with a disability the rate of employment was 25.7% compared to non-disabled youth who were employed at a rate of 60.6%.

Workforce Development Activities in Rhode Island

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

Expenditures per program vary widely, and do not paint an accurate picture of what it costs to train an individual and place them into meaningful employment. There are 340 unique vendors that receive funding from state agencies whose data was collected. Of those 340, the researchers point out that programs that cost more tend to provide more individualized or intensive services, yielding better long-term results for the individual, and therefore the State.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Governor’s Workforce Board. (2016). Comprehensive System Improvement Plan. Cranston, RI: Governor’s Workforce Board. 18 Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island (2014), Biennial Employment & Training Plan FY2014 and FY2015
The researchers suggest that the large number of programs is causing the State to spread its resources too widely, and should fund fewer programs with greater success rates. This could result in the workforce network becoming more cohesive and manageable for all involved, particularly in cases where vendors receive funding from more than one state agency. Increased coordination among agencies and targeted funding to more successful programs could lead to more effective service for job seekers and more growth opportunities for the identified high growth advanced industry clusters.

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

The same organizing principle that is the foundation of demand-driven workforce development nationally, and Real Jobs RI locally – namely, the idea that employers and industries know better than the government what their needs are; has been extended to the supply-side in Rhode Island through the state-funded Real Pathways RI. Real Pathways is an associate program to Real Jobs RI, and supports partnerships between and among public, private, and nonprofit agencies, education and training providers, and others, that focus on serving populations with traditional barriers to employment (ex. veterans, homeless individuals) or on serving regions of the state with above average concentrations of poverty or unemployment. These partnerships collaborate and strategize how to best serve clients through cooperative or collaborative workforce development programming that is demand-driven, linked to the larger workforce development network, and designed to maximize the opportunities for middle class employment. From a WIOA perspective, these partnerships provide “reinforcements” and enhanced capacity to the system at a time of limited resources.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

Implementation of Strategy:

A network government approach to solving complex policy issues has been adopted in Rhode
Island. In all state government, and particularly workforce development agencies, program administrators do not have the ability to make effective solutions to complex policy problems independently. As a result, government agencies must work collaboratively among themselves and with other non-government entities to create comprehensive action plans to meet shared goals. So what is network government?

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

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

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

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

For this reason Rhode Island has included, in addition to the core program partners, the following combined program partners in this state plan: Temporary Assistance for Needing Families, Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers program; Jobs for Veterans State Grants program; Unemployment Insurance and Senior Community Service Employment Program. Workforce development partners shall include other community based job training and placement agencies. By coordinating the planning activities of these programs, Rhode Island seeks to create a common vision for meeting the career needs of all Rhode Islanders served under these programs.
WIOA allows networked government to be achieved by providing the flexibility needed to let its one stops play a role that is natural for them within the fabric of our states workforce development network. We want to reimagine the One Stops to be a network connections facilitator. While workforce intermediaries will have the job of working with the demand end of the market, one stops gain the latitude to reimagine the role they play in our state specific and unique network. By spending the appropriate amount of time with job seekers, rather than attempting to be the entire network for the individual, the one stop can help connect job seekers to the services or industry partnerships based on the job seeker’s specific needs. Some of the important aspects of re-aligning the one stops include focusing on training career coaches, case managers and guidance counselors on how to navigate the workforce development network, aligning coaching with industry needs and providing more clear and more refined guidance for job seekers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since the initial issuance and submission of this state plan, the State Workforce Board has begun work on developing a Common Assessment framework for the WIOA system.
Working in partnership with a Community Workgroup – comprised of community advocates, providers, and knowledgeable stakeholders, and an Interagency Workgroup – comprised of mid-level or higher department leadership across all core WIOA programs – the Board has divided the issue of common assessment into component pieces; the first focusing on a uniform assessment of basic literacy, mathematics, and English Language skills. A universally applicable assessment would eliminate duplication and simplify the customer experience. The state has made progress on identification of a single common assessment tool and intends to ‘roll out’ this common assessment by July 2018. Future priorities will be the adoption of centralized/shared database where all programs will be able to access assessment results and standardized test data, as well as common client demographic information.

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

A third factor of partner coordination that must be addressed to provide better service delivery is the need to establish common standards around client intake and service referrals. This factor does not only pertain to the work conducted at the American Job Centers, but all partners providing services or connecting clients to services. Such partners may be government agencies, community providers, education institutions, and non-profit organizations. As clients receive services from multiple programs and as program staff seek to refer clients successfully to other services, the need for common data collection and sharing standards that can be adopted by all workforce partners. During the stakeholder meeting held January 13th, 2016, both community and government partners identified the need to establish a client profile that each partner can access, eliminating the duplication of data collection, and the need to establish information sharing standards around program eligibility.

The client profile should contain a record of the individual’s demographic information, resume elements, assessment results, and other data that is commonly used by service providers. The Rhode Island Departments of Education, Human Services, and Labor & Training will convene a work group comprised of program administrators and community providers to identify the common data elements of the client profile and the format in which those elements should be presented. Included in this work will be an analysis of all applicable privacy statutes of these elements and recommendations for establishing data sharing policies that fully comply with these statutes. The recommendations of this work group will be presented to the agency directors and the Governor’s Workforce Board so a statewide, multiple agency, data sharing policy can be adopted.
Standards for sharing program information help create uniformity among partners for how program information is communicated. For programs receiving referrals from other partner agencies, standard information should be provided to the referring program. For example, program eligibility requirements or program contact information should be provided to the referring program to ensure the referral is appropriate for the client and to maximize the opportunity for a client to successfully enter the new program. Creating information standards does not mean creating another form for program staff to complete, instead the standard provides programs with guidance on what information referring programs need in order to make a quality referral. The work group described above will also recommend such information sharing standards for programs receiving referrals.

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

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

Alongside this emphasis on more individualized case management, stakeholders also emphasized a need for improved referrals not only among WIOA partner agencies but to and from external service providers and community organizations. Historically, Job Center staff has been prepared to make referrals for the more common barriers to employment such as transportation, childcare, or housing. However, community advocates have stressed the importance of connecting clients to as many services as possible, particularly for significant and potentially harmful situations such as substance abuse or domestic violence. In conversations with the Community Workgroup, the State Board stressed that AJC staff cannot serve as social workers and should not be expected to be a referral mechanism to the entire spectrum of assistance and support programs. However, in speaking with frontline AJC
staff; they also described a desire to be more well versed in the range of support referral opportunities within the community. One commented that, as professionals, they do not want to be caught ‘flat footed’ when a client enters a Job Center with significant barriers and needs and staff is unsure how best to assist them.

In response to the community feedback and the input of AJC staff; the state board has been working on the development of an enhanced support service referral initiative in partnership with the United Way. The initial work product will be a desk guide of all near-by service providers who are equipped to assist with the most frequently identified barriers and challenges encountered by AJC staff such as lack of health insurance, food insecurity, substance abuse, and legal barriers. This will be a paper-based guide initially but the intent is to migrate into a web-based tool in the future. The development of this guide will be followed by informational and technical assistance sessions with AJC staff to learn more about these services and better understand what clients can expect upon referral. Lastly, the State Board will work with our Local Boards on the development of a MOU between AJC staff and the United Way’s 211 program to make 211 staff available to confer with AJC in instances where a client has multiple and/or complex challenges that appear to go beyond the available services listed in the desk guide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fourth factor of developing an IT infrastructure able to support intelligence sharing and case management across programs provides workforce partners the technology necessary to access client information as needed and to keep all service providers working with a client up-to-date on the services received by the client. The IT infrastructure solution will include an umbrella data system that is able to mine existing agency MIS systems to generate client data without requiring agencies to directly access those MIS systems. Such a system will also have the capability to generate referrals, allowing all partner programs to track client referrals in the same system and to allow staff from each program to connect quickly if additional information is required to serve the client. This data system can also serve as the electronic version of the client profile described above.

**State Operating Systems and Policies**

**State Operating System**
The State operating systems that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies. This must include a description of

- State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies. (e.g. labor market info. systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.)

- Data-collection and reporting processes used to all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.
Rhode Island continues to build upon successful strategies of the past as well as embrace new ideas for improving the public workforce development system while supporting these approaches with a strong policy and operational architecture. Increasing integration across workforce development is a continued focus which is evident through the many examples where operating system alignment has either taken place or is expected to.

**EmployRI**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All of the improvements made to the employ RI reporting mechanisms and the services that have been updated allows it to be our primary data management system for the state’s new sector based approach to workforce development and the career pathway strategies. Because of the push for more comprehensive data recording within both strategies, the activities of employers within the EmployRI network feed into the umbrella data system which will generate data about the needs of employers and job seekers.

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

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

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

**State Program and State Board Overview**

- **State Agency Organization.** The organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organization structures.

- **State Board.** A description of the State Board, including a membership roster and board activities. This section also includes a description of how the State board will implement its functions under section 101 (d) of WIOA.

**State Agency Organization**

The programs included in this plan and their delivery systems are organized under three Departments as depicted below. In addition, there are two local workforce areas that are responsible for the delivery of local activities. The local WIBS have also established such committees, such as the Disability Employment Subcommittee to ensure the needs of individuals within the local area are being met effectively through the programs and services available and to generate solutions to those needs. The specific details of the delivery services for each program are contained in the “Program Specifics” section of this plan. In addition, program specific organization charts are provided in Appendix C.
State Board Function

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

The board is also charged with overseeing the funding and investments in workforce development including WIOA dollars. As such it plays an important role in system decisions like one-stop infrastructure costs and partners roles. It is also best situated to discuss and inform on the technological improvements necessary to implement WIOA across agencies and for customers.
The Governor’s Workforce Board capacity to effectively meet its WIOA duties lies first in its dynamic membership and it enlightened committee structure. The full GWB meets no less than 10 times a year, while its committees are typically active monthly. The board’s work is coordinated across the following six committees - Strategic Investment and Evaluation, Executive, Adult Education, Youth, Career Pathways, Employers. Each committee plays a critical role under WIOA with the Executive Committee playing the principle lead and hub of coordination. The Executive Committee consists of the chairs of each of the other committees.

**Executive Committee**

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

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

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

**Strategic Investment and Evaluation Committee**

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

**Youth and Adult Education and Employment Committee and Executive Committees**

Title I Youth and Title II Adult Education policy are coordinated through these respective committees. Each committee’s membership either brings or has developed an expertise in the area of adult education and job training and will be responsible going forward for this work. The Executive Committee reviews and executes all WIOA policies and ensures consistency, uniformity, and alignment with the state plan and priorities.
Career Pathways Committee (Youth) and Executive Committee

Rhode Island has been leading on career pathway system work for several years now. The Career Pathways Advisory Committee was made statutorily required in 2011. Since then the committee has been the forum for emerging Career Pathway implementation. The mission of the CPAC is to prepare individuals in school and out of school youth for careers and connect businesses to a skilled workforce. This will be accomplished through service integration by unifying training, education, employment and supportive service programs into a single, customer-focused system across the state of Rhode Island. The Rhode Island career pathways model values employer engagement, customer focus, and data-driven decision making through programs and services that are collaboratively developed by education, workforce, employer and economic development partners. Title I Youth policy is developed and deliberated through the Career Pathways Committee. The Executive Committee reviews and executes all WIOA policies and ensures consistency, uniformity, and alignment with the state plan and priorities.

State Board Activities

The Governor’s Workforce Board manages its responsibilities via a highly responsive and expert committee structure. An overview of this structure is presented above in section III (a)(1) of this plan. The GWB is staffed by six professionals including an executive director. The staff have responsibilities related to policy development, performance and accountability, career pathways, youth programming, and employer/sector partnership.
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Suzanna Alba</td>
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<td>Mike Grey (Chair)</td>
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<td>Sodexo School Services</td>
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<td>Debbie Proffitt</td>
<td>Vice President- Defense Division, Purvis Defense Systems</td>
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<td>Steve Kitchin</td>
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Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

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

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

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

Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

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

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

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

**Allocation of WIOA Adult Funds:** (See Workforce Investment Notices Appendix G and Appendix H) The Secretary of Labor and the Governor of each state use the same three-part formula for the distribution of Adult funds, in the Secretary’s case to the states and in each Governor’s case, to local Workforce Development Areas.
1. The average number of unemployed individuals for Areas of Substantial Unemployment for the previous 12 month period.
2. The number of excess unemployed individuals or the ASU excess (depending on which is higher) averages for the same 12 month period as used for the ASU unemployed data.
3. The number of economically disadvantaged Adults (age 18 – 72, excluding college students in the workforce and military) from special tabulations of data from the American Community Survey (ACS).

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

(iii) **Allocation of WIOA Dislocated Worker Funds:** (See Workforce Investment Notices Appendix I and Appendix J) The Secretary of Labor and the Governor of each state use the same three-part formula for the distribution of Dislocated Worker funds, in the Secretary’s case to the states and in each Governor’s case, to local Workforce Development Areas. The three data factors utilized by the State for calculation of the formula are:
1. The number of unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.
2. The number of excess unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.
3. The number of long term unemployed, averaged for the 12-month period of October through September in the previous Program Year.

**Program Data**

**Data Alignment and Integration**

WIOA Core Programs are administered across several state agencies each with separate case management and performance data systems. The ability to align, integrate and ideally unify
these information management systems has been a coveted yet elusive goal. All too often these separate systems represent major investments in infrastructure, contracts and staff training. Both WIOA and significant advancements in web-based technology hold promise.

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

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

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

Assessment of Participants’ Post-Program Success

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

Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

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

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

EmployRI, the State’s Virtual One-stop and Case Management Information System, provides the highest level of confidentiality where required and conforms to federal law Sec. 205 [42 U.S.C.] (c) (C) (vii). The VOS system supports the security standards recommended for State Employment Security Agencies by the Information Technology Support Center, College Park, Maryland. The system supports user name and password access. The user name determines the access level and whether a user may access certain services and confidential data. If a user does not have privileges to view certain data, these fields will not be shown.

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

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

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

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

Priority of Service for Veterans

- Discuss how the State implements and monitors the administration of priority of service to covered persons
As required by 38 U.S.C 4215 (b) and 20 CFR part 1001 and 1010, priority of service is provided to ensure that veterans and eligible persons receive consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify within the employment service delivery system and any sub-grantee funded in whole or in part by the US Department of Labor. Rhode Island’s two local workforce development boards; which are the Workforce Partner of Greater Rhode Island and the Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, include the priority of service requirements in their local plans. At the local level, One-Stop managers are responsible for ensuring that priority of service is effectively integrated throughout the activities and services of the center. Our One Stop centers have intake forms/sign in sheets to identify veterans and eligible persons when they visit our service delivery points in person. Front desk staff are trained to inquire about veteran status, so if the customer identifies as a veteran or an eligible person, the individual is provided immediate priority. In addition, display signs are posted at the One-stops point of entry that clearly describes priority of service an effort to encourage individuals to self-identify their veteran status. This information is also conveyed when veterans and eligible persons access service electronically. Our web-based EmployRI system includes content that explains priority of service, as well as provides veterans and eligible persons the opportunity to self-identify veteran status through virtual self-service registration.

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

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

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

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

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

ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have designated days and times at each of the One-Stop Centers in order to provide access to ORS services including consultations, accepting referrals, applications, counseling, information and referral, and placement services. This is also an opportunity for ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to re-enforce client awareness of the Career Center as an additional resource for help with employment including Real Jobs RI. In addition, ORS personnel, through the Assistive Technology grant (ATAP), provide consultation and training to the One-Stop staff on disability issues, accessibility considerations, and assistive technology. All of the centers provide universal access to their services including registration, skills assessment, career counseling, job search, assistance in filling out unemployment claims and evaluation of eligibility for training programs to people with disabilities. Alternate formats for all information and application materials are offered. These include large print documents and use of various assisted technology devices and tools including TTY, Captel, Zoom Text, Magnifier, Pocket Talkers, Jaws and Magic. All staff in the One-Stop have been trained on the use of these tools and educated as to methods of communicating all services to individuals with disabilities. ORS personnel are periodically enlisted to provide training on Disability related topics.

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

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

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

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

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

- **Language Identification Card:** This process provides a Menu of Languages (over 150) that customers can identify and select their language of origin. The staff member has the ability to contact an interpreter immediately by telephone and start the translation process to begin services and help set up future appointments.

- **Translation Services:** The Workforce Development Services Division of the RI DLT has procured vendors to perform Interpretation and Translation services for individuals identified as Limited English Proficient Customers. Interpretation services for appointments and programs are available within 24 hours of the customer’s request.

- **Internal Bi-lingual Staff:** All Comprehensive One-Stop locations have limited bilingual staff on hand for immediate assistance.

- **EmployRI Spanish Module:** EmployRI.org is an internet-based system that contains information about job seekers, employers, job orders and training providers. EmployRI is also available in Spanish for the benefit of the department’s Limited English Proficient customers.

- **EmployRI Mobile App (Spanish):** In 2015, RIDLT introduced the EmployRI Mobile app for both Apple (iOS) and Android mobile devices in English and Spanish. The app makes it easier for job seekers to search and apply for jobs posted in EmployRI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**COMMON ASSURANCES**

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

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

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

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

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

The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities.
The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3).

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

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

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

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

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

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE AND COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

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

Work Based Training Models:

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

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

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

**General Requirements - Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas**

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

Rhode Island has designated two local workforce development areas with the state: A. Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Area (Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As per WIOA Section 102(b)(5) and proposed 20 CFR 679.290 and 683.630, a Chief Elected Official who requests and is denied initial and/or subsequent designation has 10 business days to submit a formal appeal to the State Board by communicating, in writing, the reason(s) for appealing the Governor’s decision and providing evidence or information that support the appeal. Upon receipt of a formal appeal, the State Board has 10 business days to render a decision on that appeal. If a decision is not rendered within that time frame or if the appeal is similarly denied, the Chief Elected Official may request review by the U.S. Secretary of Labor pursuant to proposed 20 CFR 683.640. The Secretary may subsequently order local workforce development area designation if the Secretary determines that the entity was not accorded procedural rights under the state’s appeals process or finds that the area meets the initial and/or subsequent designation requirements at WIOA Section 106(b)(2) or 106(b)(3) and proposed 20 CFR 679.250.
• Provide the appeals process referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

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

**Statewide Activities**

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

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

• Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers

• Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

• Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A).) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-affected dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

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

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

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

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

Emphasis will also be placed on supporting customer-centered solutions when implementing the opportunities under WIOA. Lastly, Rhode Island is committed to driving system improvement with its state resources, including the effective execution of the required activities under the law. With these priorities in mind, Rhode Island reserves the right to maximize its flexibility to support Governor’s agenda with the set-aside funds.
Describe the states criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

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

Youth Program Requirements

Introduction and Vision

Across multiple funding streams and initiatives, Rhode Island’s vision is for all youth in need of career services to have access to: (1) High quality career guidance and workforce development services, (2) all necessary wrap-around services and supports to increase their likelihood of success and completion, and (3) high quality and career-relevant work experiences and work based learning opportunities to serve as a pathway toward meeting their personal career aspirations. This vision would be met through a cohesive, aligned, and high-functioning statewide workforce development system for youth that provides all youth multiple and scaled opportunities to gain work experiences and employment, is flexible to accommodate the winding career pathways and life circumstances that today’s youth encounter, and is employer and demand-driven to ensure youth are prepared for the state’s high-wage, high-demand employment sectors. Through such a system this effort does not fall on the WIOA youth system alone.

The Governor’s Workforce Board, in collaboration and alignment with the RI Department of Education, Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, and the Governor’s Office, have designed an ambitious strategy and workplan focused on in-school youth called Prepare Rhode Island. The Prepare RI initiative is fully underway, and is partially funded by a 3-year “New Skills for Youth” grant from JP Morgan Chase; Rhode Island is one of only 10 states to have received this grant. The PrepareRI workplan includes a state commitment to the goal that all high school students have access to a work-based learning experience before they graduate and includes significant systems investments and guidance as follows:

* The incubation of a Statewide Career Readiness Intermediary – a centralized entity that would serve as a facilitator for employers, schools, and providers to develop youth work experiences and work-based learning opportunities, streamline and coordinate processes, eliminate duplication and confusion, and take the effort to scale statewide. The Intermediary will also manage a high-quality paid internship program for high school students at top Rhode Island companies, to be piloted in Summer 2018.

* Investments in “Real Skills for Youth” partnerships among schools, youth-serving organizations, industry, and others to develop and implement high-quality paid work-based learning experiences for youth in the summer and year-round career readiness programming for youth; while the focus is primarily on in-school youth, out-of-school youth will be served under these partnerships as well, with opportunities to braid WIOA funds.
The State Workforce Board recently issued guidance on the state vision for work-based learning (WBL), including definitions of activities, standards of quality, essential skills needed for the workplace, and legal guidance [viewable here: https://gwb.ri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GWB-WBL-Guidance_COMBINED.pdf?189db0]. These standards currently focus on work-based learning opportunities for in-school youth but will help guide and inform efforts for expanding work-based learning opportunities to postsecondary and out of school youth as described below.

With the foundation and momentum of PrepareRI, the state now turns to the development an equally ambitious aligned plan to serve out-of-school youth and connect them to work experiences and work-based learning opportunities. The state was recently selected for the National Governor’s Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Policy Academy focusing on expanding work-based learning opportunities for postsecondary and out of school youth. The focus of that effort will be to:

- Determine ways to connect ongoing K-12 and postsecondary infrastructures and work-based learning opportunities to youth who have dropped out or left school and are unemployed/underemployed.
- Identify programs/opportunities locally and nationally that effectively support these populations.
- Investigate current and potential funding opportunities to support this work.

The results of PrepareRI and the NGA Policy Academy will enhance and operationalize the elements of our youth strategy described below and will guide WIOA policies and investments as it relates to youth, particularly out of school youth.

Rhode Island’s WIOA Youth Strategy - Pathways and Partnerships

Rhode Island’s decades long investment in our Youth Career Centers (branded as the “YouthWorks411”) has resulted in a network of talented and responsive service providers that excel in meeting youth “where they are” and providing the requisite referrals and wrap-around services that gird each youth for success in whatever career service or training that is appropriate for them. These services are provided in a contextualized way and in a manner that aligns with their career goals and prospects.

Due to the strategic co-deployment of WIOA Title I funding alongside state funds, services are available for all youth ages 14-24 years of age throughout the state regardless of income or socio-economic factors. Eligibility is determined on the ‘back end’ with WIOA dollars are prioritized to serve Out of School Youth. This wider service net helps build referral networks and ‘word of mouth’ among a much larger pool of youth and provides access and avenues to reach otherwise difficult to engage out of school youth.

The youth career center network is itself part of the larger workforce development network described earlier in the Executive Summary.

Youth career centers serve as an entry point and spring board that primes youth for success and then pipelines and connects to partner programs for placements into work experiences and work-based learning opportunities. Such partners could include but not be limited to:

- Real Jobs RI – Industry-sector partnerships lead by an intermediary that, collectively, have access to hundreds of potential work experience and employment opportunities within Rhode Island’s high wage and/or high demand industries.
- Real Pathways RI – Service provider partnerships lead by an intermediary that specialize in meeting the needs of populations with barriers to employment and are provided resources and guidance to develop demand-driven programming with employers.
Youth Career Readiness Intermediary – As previously mentioned, a centralized business-facing entity that would serve as a facilitator for employers, schools, and providers to develop youth work experiences and work-based learning opportunities, streamline and coordinate processes, eliminate duplication and confusion, and take the effort to scale statewide.

The commitment to securing work experiences and WBL opportunities for youth aligns with WIOA’s new emphasis on providing eligible youth with high-quality work experiences and requiring that at least 20% of youth funding be dedicated to this activity. Rhode Island recognizes how powerful WIOA funds can be in assisting low-income and out-of-school youth, particularly those with barriers to employment, with gaining valuable experience in work places that build work history, skills, and job-readiness.

All of these efforts will be coordinated closely with the state Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS) to ensure access to services and programming to transition-age youth with disabilities. One such program is Project SEARCH, a work-readiness program for secondary school youth providing on-the-job work experience through rotational internships. The State Board is currently working with ORS on the potential expansion of Project SEARCH into more locations, and potentially for adults as well as transition-age youth. Additionally, Rhode Island intends to eventually connect ORS and its provider network with the aforementioned Youth Career Readiness Intermediary to help connect with employers to provide opportunities to students and youth with disabilities for career exploration that would lead to competitive, integrated employment. Given the complexity and additional services required to effectively serve and place youth with disabilities; this is a longer-term priority.

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

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

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

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

Meeting the performance accountability measures will be part of the contract between the local boards and the grantee. Regular reporting and monitoring will keep the local boards informed of the performance of the grantee and any grantee not performing will receive technical assistance to improve performance.

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

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

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

Since the initial issuance and submission of this state plan, the state board, in concert with local boards, community advocates, and youth providers, developed an additional assistance policy that recognizes two ‘types’ of barriers a youth can face which requires additional assistance to overcome: Education and Employment barriers.
Education barriers include factors such as chronic absenteeism, below average academic performance, falling behind on graduation expectations, or financial/transportation challenges interfering with attendance.

Employment barriers include never holding a job (older youth), repeated failure to secure employment within a 60 day period, loss of employment in the last 30 day period, and family history of chronic unemployment or reliance on public assistance.

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<tr>
<th>Additional Assistance - Educational Barriers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ISY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has missed 18 or more days of school in the most recent academic year (secondary only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In school (secondary or postsecondary) with a GPA of less than 2.0.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OSY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has left educational program because of transportation or financial situation (secondary only)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In-School and Out of School Youth</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• One or more grade levels below age appropriate level</td>
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<th>Additional Assistance - Employment Barriers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In-School and Out of School Youth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has never held a job</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has had two or more employment interviews without being hired in past 60 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has lost employment placement in past 30 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has a family history of chronic unemployment, including long-term public assistance.</td>
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All Rhode Island agencies that are responsible for the creation and administration of educational programs are currently working diligently to create policy that will require additional assistance for eligible participants to enter and complete the educational programs they have created. Although this policy will not be finalized by the date of the WIOA state plan submission, it is of high priority to all parties that this will be finalized in a timely fashion.

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

In addition to the work already underway by the Raimondo administration to focus on core programs that engage and train in-school and out of school youth in training programs to
create a capable and competent future workforce, WIOA also directly funds Rhode Island Job Corps through Title 1 Subsection C of the law. Exeter Job Corps Academy’s (EJCA) mission, career pathways design and performance measurement requirements immediately align with the outlined three strategies in this combined plan. EJCA has served over 2,730 youth since opening in January of 2005 with the majority of these students completing their initial education and training goals. The program has utilized members of the Workforce Intermediaries to guide their Career Technical training programs as well as identify the variety of industry-based credentials that our students achieve to be competitive in the Rhode Island Labor Market.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Alternative learning plans shall be developed, and amended if necessary, in consultation with the pupil, a school guidance counselor, the school principal and at least one parent or guardian of the pupil, and submitted to the superintendent for approval.
(3) If the superintendent does not approve the alternative learning plan, the parent or guardian of the pupil may appeal such decision to the school committee. A parent or guardian may appeal the decision of the school committee to the commissioner of education pursuant to chapter 39 of title 16.”

**Wagner- Peyser Program Elements**

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

**Employment Service Professional Staff Development**

The State recognizes the value and importance of providing high quality customer service to both our employer and job seeker customers. The RI Department of Labor’s Workforce Development Services Division (WDS) continually assesses and evaluates the current skills and abilities of One-Stop Staff in successfully performing their various job duties. Training is provided in an ongoing manner to meet the continuing professional development needs of our One-Stop Staff.

WDS continues to provide in house training to the staff of the Business Workforce Center (BWC) on standard business service knowledge, programs and competencies across state agencies providing a variety of services and programs to the State’s employer community. WDS continues to ensure that One-Stop management and staff have current knowledge and understanding of the local, state and national economic trends as it continues to implement demand-driven programs and services. Specific areas of professional development are:

1. **Labor Exchange:** WDS continually reviews and evaluates the skills required to improve staff abilities to conduct job seeker and employer services such as workshops, one-on-one counseling, conducting public presentations and providing exceptional customer service. These skills are essential to providing job seekers the necessary understanding and utilization of the services available to them through the State’s Workforce Development System.

2. **Labor Market Information (LMI):** WDS provides in house training in the area of labor market information to staff to better assist customers in understanding skill levels of in-demand jobs and how to identify transferrable skills or the need to upgrade current skills to meet the needs of employers. It also assists staff and customers in identifying salary demands and industry trends. Staff and customers will gain knowledge of how to research companies and better prepare for an interview or salary negotiation. The State had invested in tools to help in this effort.

3. **Effective Use of Tools:** One-Stop Staff have been trained and continue to be trained on utilization of the EmployRI (Virtual One-Stop System) including demonstration of how to better assist job seekers in job search methods, skills assessment and job matching as well as labor market information on industry trends and career growth and salary projections to help customers make more informed decisions on employment and training. Staff are trained to provide better understanding of
identifying and highlighting skills in resumes as they relate to the demand-driven job
descriptions.

4. **Business and Demand-Driven Technologies:** Professional staff development
includes continuing on-line and classroom training in EmployRI usage. One-Stop
Staff are trained to interact with employers to assist in job postings, resume search
and recruitments. Staff are trained to disseminate employer needs to customers in a
timely manner to meet the demand-driven needs of the employer. The latest tools and
techniques are provided to enhance employer engagement and help to better direct
job seekers to quality jobs.

5. **Technology:** WDS provides professional development to staff regarding upgrades in
IT resources to be kept up to date regarding the most effective use of the latest
technologies. This includes classroom training in the latest version of MS Office,
continual webinars
and classroom training on the most effective use of the EmployRI system and use of
labor market information. All staff in the One-Stops have been trained on the use of
Adaptive Technology (AT) and educated as to methods of communicating all
services to individuals with disabilities. Adaptive Technology includes use of various
AT devices and tools including TTY, Captel, Zoom Text, Magnifier, Pocket Talkers,
Jaws and Magic.

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

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

**Employment Service Professional Staff Development**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State has conducted the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program (previously REA) since 2005 and continues to do so. Currently under the program, all UCX claimants and UI claimants deemed most likely to exhaust benefits (based on profiling scores) are directed to report to the One-Stops for mandatory participation in RESEA. The program focuses on providing participants with an overview of and access to the services available at the One-Stop Centers as well as through the state’s Virtual One-Stop (EmployRI), a detailed review of the claimant’s responsibilities while collecting UI, and assistance accessing the resources necessary to lessen the time on unemployment and to return to work as quickly as possible. The program also mandates each participant receives two one-on-one sessions with a One-Stop staff member in additional to participation in additional reemployment services. Over the course of the two one-on-one meetings, UI Eligibility Reviews are conducted, staff reviews the claimant’s work search, provides detailed labor market information, assists with job matching, conducts a skills gap analysis, reviews claimant’s resume, assists claimant in registering with and accessing the Virtual One-Stop, schedules each claimant for additional reemployment services including workshops and/or training, and makes referrals to UI adjudication as appropriate.

Since August 31, 2014, the UI Division has required claimants (except those meeting specific exemption criteria) to post their resume in the state’s Virtual One-Stop (EmployRI) by the 6th consecutive week of collecting UI benefits. To comply, claimants are required to be registered on EmployRI and utilize the system to create or upload a resume. Posting a resume on EmployRI allows Employers utilizing the system to conduct talent searches of UI claimants and allows claimants access to additional features including skills assessments, LMI, an automated job search tool (Virtual Recruiter) that sends automated messages regarding potential jobs that are a match to the criteria the user has defined, and other job search and reemployment resources. Claimants are also advised through call center and website messaging as well as printed media that they may take advantage of services provided at the state’s One-Stop Career Centers.
Additionally, for claimants not referred to the One-Stops through RESEA and any other unemployed individuals, the state uses various media formats including print, television, and social media to communicate job openings, job fairs and training opportunities. Messaging on specific job openings refer customers to the Virtual One-Stop to apply while job fair communications provide location information, including instructions to visit a One-Stop Center when appropriate, and each weekend the state has an advertisement in the local newspaper that details scheduled job fairs and training opportunities, directing those interested to the One-Stop center. These types of outreach provided the initial contact for individuals to interact with the state’s One-Stop system and allow Staff, through face-to-face and electronic interaction to provide reemployment assistance to these individuals. Any individual may also register on EmployRI and take advantage of all of the self-service reemployment tools available on the site.

- Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate including the following:

- Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

After filing a claim, UI claimants are advised via mail of work search requirements and other pertinent information regarding their claim. The materials in this mailing advise claimants of the existence of the state’s One-Stop offices and invites them to visit the office for job search assistance and reemployment services. Claimants are required to post their resume on EmployRI and use of that system to do so triggers the claimant’s WP enrollment, after which, their active enrollment and existence of a resume allows staff to conduct job matching and referrals to positions for the claimants. Additionally, claimants selected for RESEA are mandated to visit the One-Stop center for reemployment services and are informed of additional services the One-Stop provides that they can access under Wagner-Peyser. After completion of RESEA claimants who have not yet returned to work are encouraged to continue their interaction with the One-Stop system, both in-person and virtually which continues their participation in WP supported activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)**

**Introduction**

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

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

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

Assessment of Need

• Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.
• An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means: 1) identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers’ needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.
• An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing MSFW characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This Information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data
sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

**Review of the Previous Year’s Agricultural Activity in the State**

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

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

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

**Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Activities in the State**

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

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

Regardless, information was given regarding netWORKri services and the MSFW Complaint System. Those that have accepted agricultural positions have been from Jamaica and speak primarily English-African Creole language known as Jamaican Patois. The approximate number of MFWs in the State during peak season is 27 and there were 34 MSFWs during peak season.

**Projection of Agricultural Activity in the State**

The level of crop activity in PY 2016 is expected to increase with a possibility that economic growth may lead to a more active agricultural economy resulting in expanding labor needs. Based on prior years the majority of the crop activities will be vegetables, strawberries and apples.
Most farms are family run occupying 69,589 acres dedicated to farming in RI. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that from 2007 to 2012, the total number of farms in Rhode Island grew from 1219 to 1243.

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

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

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

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

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

In accordance to the 2012 RI Census, the projected number of MSFWs in the State for the coming year would increase by approximately 10 percent. RI continues to seek new ways to identify MSFWs including outreach and will collaborate with the Unemployment Insurance Division to identify additional MSFW not registering in EmployRI or not identified by outreach.

Outreach Activities

☐ The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency’s proposed strategies for:

A. Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

B. Providing technical assistance to outreach workers. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment service complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

C. Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

D. Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

E. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

Numeric Goals

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

The DLT would like to see these efforts increased to reflect a minimum of 20 days of outreach to MSFWs and more if the need is determined. The DLT will continue to offer information on services and programs for MSFWs and business services to promote growth and retention. To support this effort, a Business Service Representative will accompany the SMA on all outreach visits.
The RI DLT will conduct outreach activities to locate and to inform migrant and seasonal farm workers about the core, intensive training services available through the netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) is available to assist the netWORKri staff in the conduct of outreach activities.

RI has a collaborative atmosphere between state agencies, nonprofits and the farming community. Continued coordination is critical to maintain a flourishing agricultural region. We will continue to work cooperatively to improve existing employment and training programs to emphasize the quality of service and customer satisfaction. The NFJP is an integral part of the public workforce system. The NFJP also partners with community organizations and state agencies to counter the chronic unemployment and underemployment experienced by farmworkers who depend primarily on jobs in agricultural labor performed across the country.

**Assessment of Available Resources**

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

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

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

For the quarter ending June 30, 2015 the RI DLT’s SMA conducted 14 days of outreach. The plan for PY 2016 is to increase the level of outreach activity to twenty days. Outreach to ten farms was conducted for bruising, Immigration Ministry, and three farms and prevailing/practice surveys were mailed. For PY2015-2016, so far, the SMA has conducted nineteen outreach activities trying to identify MSFW’s. These have included eleven field visits to local farms explaining the system to local agricultural employers. Also, three field checks took place to inform MSFWs of netWORKri services. No violations or complaints were found. Field conditions were checked, a house inspection was conducted, and three farms workers were interviewed. Joint outreach took place with an Outreach worker from NEFWC. Additionally, the SMA met with four Community Based Organizations to explain services available and to promote cooperative working relations between the DLT and farm worker groups.
SMA in conjunction with the New England Farm Worker’s Council representative, located in the Providence netWORKri Career Center, will develop a schedule for the purpose of coordinating outreach efforts. Visits will be made to address the noted increase of fruit farms to provide farm workers with information regarding employment and training services at the DLT One Stop Career Centers in addition to their legal rights pertaining to wage and hour. Sanitary working conditions in and outside of their living quarters and also the effects of heat exhaustion are always brought to the farm workers attention. Farm workers are also provided with information pertaining to supportive services that the NEFWC can assist with such as heating assistance and additional training programs. Printed netWORKri promotional material is distributed as appropriate.

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

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

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

- Marketing the employment service complaint system to farm workers and other groups. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State will continue to administer the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to labor needs. Work with the New England Farm Worker’s Council; continue to attempt to develop a relationship with farm and agricultural organizations to identify agricultural employers who may not have been previously contacted. The SMA will also research and identify linkages
with the Hispanic community to be able to connect with potential Migrant seasonal farm workers if they are present in RI.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

(i) **Previous Years History**

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(ii) **PY15**

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**F. Other Requirements**

**Review and Public Comment**

- In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must:
  1. Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP;
  2. Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and
  3. Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

- The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and
suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

- Data Assessment. Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.
- Assessment of progress. The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.
- State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

State Monitor Advocate

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

Participation and Public Comment

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

1. RI Department of Environmental Management-Agricultural Division
2. RI Farm Bureau http://rifb.org/

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

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

Narrative

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

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

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

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

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

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