

# REAL JOBS Rhode Island

RI Department of Labor and Training

[Real Jobs Rhode Island](#)

## Solicitation for Partnership Proposals

Issue Date: Monday August 31, 2020

### NOTICE

A Prospective Applicant that wishes to assure receipt of any changes or additional materials related to this Solicitation should email [DLT.RealJobs@DLT.ri.gov](mailto:DLT.RealJobs@DLT.ri.gov) immediately and provide the Prospective Applicant's contact name, organizational affiliation and email address.

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**RI Department of Labor and Training**

**KEY INFORMATION SUMMARY SHEET**

Solicitation for Proposals:	Real Jobs Rhode Island
Solicitation Issue Date:	Monday August 31, 2020
Solicitation Issuing Office:	RI Department of Labor and Training – Executive Office Real Jobs Rhode Island Program Director <b>Julie O’Connell</b>
Proposals are to be submitted to:	Electronically: (pdf proposal - budget submitted via excel) to <b>Julie O’Connell</b> at <a href="mailto:julie.oconnell@dlt.ri.gov">julie.oconnell@dlt.ri.gov</a>  By Mail: RI Department of Labor and Training 1511 Pontiac Avenue Cranston, RI 02920 Attention: Real Jobs RI <b><u>HAND DELIVERY CANNOT BE ACCEPTED AT THIS TIME</u></b>
Pre-Proposal Conference:	<b>Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EST</b> <b>Virtual Conference</b> Interested parties must register in advance at <a href="mailto:Janet.Pratt@dlt.ri.gov">Janet.Pratt@dlt.ri.gov</a> All Conference-related materials will be made available online for those who cannot attend.
Submission of Questions:	All questions related to this solicitation should be submitted via email to the following email address: <a href="mailto:DLT.RealJobs@DLT.ri.gov">DLT.RealJobs@DLT.ri.gov</a> no later than <b>Friday, September 25, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. EST</b>
Q&A Posting:	All questions and answers addressed via email or at the Pre-Proposal Conference will be posted to the Real Jobs RI website at <a href="http://www.DLT.ri.gov/realjobsri">www.DLT.ri.gov/realjobsri</a> by <b>Friday, October 2, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. EST</b>
Grant Proposals Due:	<b>Friday, November 13, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. EST</b>
Awards Announced:	<b>Friday, December 11, 2020</b>

The **contract period** for the Real Jobs Partnerships established will be from **January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023**, with an option to renew the Partnership Agreement for an additional two years. After receiving an initial award through this solicitation process, Partnerships may apply for additional funding to repeat successful activities, or to address other workforce needs within their respective industry or region. Additional funds will be awarded based on factors including available funds and partnership performance.

# Table of Contents

<b>I. Funding Opportunity Description</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Real Jobs RI Overview	1
B. Purpose and Priorities of Partnership Awards	3
C. Requirements of a Real Jobs RI Workforce Solution	4
D. Funding Stream and Authority	5
<b>II. Award Information</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Available Funding and Number of Awards	5
B. Award Duration and Timeline	5
C. Program Director	6
D. Pre-Proposal Conference	6
E. Proposal Due Date and Time	6
<b>III. Eligibility and General Information</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Eligible Lead Applicants	6
B. Required Partnership Structure	7
C. Required Partner Roles	7
D. Training Activities and Training Providers	8
E. Leveraged Resources	8
F. Targeted Industry Sector and/or Region	8
G. Eligible and Ineligible Expenses	9
<b>IV. Proposal Format and Submission Information</b>	<b>9</b>
A. How to Apply and Submission Requirements	9
B. Cover Page	10
C. Table of Contents	10
D. Letter of Application	10
E. Proposal Narrative	10
F. Budget and Budget Narrative	13
<b>V. Proposal Review and Selection</b>	<b>13</b>
A. Proposal Award Review Process	13
B. Proposal Award Selection Process	14
<b>VI. Administration and Reporting</b>	<b>15</b>
A. Post-Award Procedure	15
B. Role of the Real Jobs RI Advisor	15
C. Payment Options	15
D. Participant Data	15
E. Performance Metrics	16
F. Reporting Requirements	16
G. Comprehensive Plan	16
H. Program Evaluation	17
I. Additional Funding	17
J. Right to Revoke Funding, Audit and Suspend Funds	17

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

The RI Department of Labor and Training is issuing this Solicitation for Partnership Proposals for qualified organizations to form industry sector and strategic workforce development partnerships that will collaboratively work with the State of Rhode Island and other entities to meet employers' workforce needs, advance the skills of Rhode Island workers, grow the state's economy, and increase sustainable employment for working families.

Approved partnerships will work closely with the Department to define and implement programmatic proposals to meet the goals of this Solicitation. Through regular interaction and collaboration with the Department, approved partnerships will identify areas of need and craft effective, data-driven solutions that drive economic development and opportunity. This cooperative model will allow for creative, innovative, and precisely-targeted approaches to economic growth and expansion of sustainable employment.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit an initial funding request that does not exceed \$150,000.

### A. Real Jobs RI Overview

Real Jobs RI is a state and federally funded, competitive workforce and economic development program. It is designed to ensure that Rhode Island employers have the talent they need to compete and grow while providing targeted education and skills training to Rhode Island workers and jobseekers.

Real Jobs RI grows business-led partnerships that build workforce solutions to address their unique workforce challenges. Solutions can include:

- Placing new employees into immediate job openings;
- Upskilling current employees to advance skills and/or remain competitive;
- Helping business owners and entrepreneurs advance their ventures;
- Creating pipelines of talent for the future.

Real Jobs RI is a win/win because companies get the talent they need to compete globally and grow locally, and Rhode Islanders get opportunities to thrive in a flourishing economy.

### **Bridging the Gap between Workforce and Economic Development**

Real Jobs RI endeavors to disrupt the misleading distinction between workforce and economic development. It is becoming increasingly clear that healthy economic growth is tied to the availability of a talented workforce capable of adding value at every step of a business's activities. Enterprises that grow in an "ecosystem" in which they can find the right workforce succeed where others fail. This is one of the reasons that similar enterprises tend to "cluster" together – they share an available pool of talent. By collaborating closely with workforce intermediaries, Real Job RI will feed these existing and emerging clusters of economic activity.

### **The Role of the Workforce Intermediary**

Workforce intermediaries are entities that organize and work with employers, employees, government agencies and other organizations to solve problems within sectors and help grow sectors by developing a base of knowledge about the organizations and businesses, as well as available public and private resources. The Real Jobs RI program seeks to identify, support and help grow workforce intermediaries in strategic sectors of the state's economy.

It is the intent of Real Jobs RI that Real Jobs Partnerships serve as intermediaries within their industries. These intermediaries will be able to facilitate better designed, more coordinated and more effective training programs due to their knowledge of the industry.

### **The Role of the Partnership**

To achieve these goals, Real Jobs RI funds activities of Real Jobs RI Partnerships. These are collaborations of stakeholders led by groups of employers in the same industry. Partnerships also include, but are not limited to, any of the following kinds of organizations: nonprofits, community-based organizations, two- and/or four- year institutions of higher education, K-12 programs, local workforce boards, industry associations, local governments, local or regional economic development agencies, labor unions, philanthropic organizations, and other training providers and relevant partners. The purpose of these partnerships is to implement strategic plans that meet employers' workforce needs, advance the skills of Rhode Island workers and jobseekers, grow the state's economy, and increase sustainable employment.

Partnerships coalesce around a target industry sector and/or region. They may start with a group of employers who are struggling due to a shortage of skilled workers in the labor market; a labor market data analysis by a regional workforce board or an education stakeholder group looking to identify target industries with workforce training needs; nonprofits and local departments of social services who band together to improve the lives of residents through skills training and seek to partner with employers with common workforce and training needs; or a regional economic development entity who recognizes a common need in an industry within a region and begins the process of collaboration. The key to all of these partnerships is that they include a group of employers who are from the same industry or have a similar workforce need and are meaningfully engaged in the development of the partnership.

These partnerships are strategic because: they are carefully built to include *all* necessary partners before workforce solutions are designed; they cut across traditional workforce, education and social services system silos; they consider the economic realities of a regional industry in assessing skills gaps and training needs; and, they are broader than the development of customized training for one employer.

### **The Role of the Department**

**Funds provided through Real Jobs RI are structured under a cooperative agreement contractual model.** In keeping with the win/win approach of the Real Jobs RI program, this model deploys the substantive expertise of Real Jobs Partnerships and the technical proficiency of Department staff to efficiently and effectively design, plan, and implement economic and workforce strategies that serve the needs and vision of the state's employers and workforce. This cooperative format promotes ease-of-use for Real Jobs Partnerships by providing a direct connection with a Real Jobs RI Advisor who will offer technical and practical assistance at every step of the process, allowing for real-time adjustments to proposals and programs, and ensuring that obstacles are rapidly identified and addressed, enabling effective and efficient activities that provide real value to the state's workforce and the employers who ultimately benefit.

## Program Structure

The 2021 Real Jobs RI competitive application process has two key components:

- (1) Partnership development; and
- (2) A proposed workforce solution plan.

To be deemed responsive to the partnership development component, applicants must identify and describe the members of the proposed Real Jobs RI Partnership and the role to be played by each member. Required members and roles are set forth in detail in Section III.

To be deemed responsive to the workforce solution component, applicants must submit a proposed plan to address an identified area of need or opportunity. Workforce solution requirements are listed in detail in subsection C below.

**Applicants must address both components within their proposal submission and will be evaluated on each.** Applicants may be approved as Partnerships without receiving funding for their proposed workforce solution. These Partnerships will have the opportunity to work with a Real Jobs RI Advisor to refine and resubmit their proposed workforce solution. Please note, however, that **applications that do not include a proposed workforce solution plan will be deemed nonresponsive** to the entire Solicitation.

### B. Purpose and Priorities of the Partnership Award

The Partnership award is the focus of this Solicitation. The purpose of the Partnership award is to provide awardees with funding to implement workforce solutions designed to address industry workforce skills gaps and employ or advance workers within a targeted industry sector and/or region. Applicants should:

- identify target industry sectors and/or regions that include multiple employers and strategic partners;
- identify the critical skills gaps, workforce needs, and other long-term workforce issues in the target industry sector and/or region, particularly in high-demand occupations, that satisfy employer workforce needs through a planning process led by employers;
- identify the training, education, human resource and workforce solutions to address these critical industry needs;
- describe a detailed plan to implement these solutions;
- maximize collaboration through direct financial or in-kind contributions by employer partners and braiding of other public or philanthropic funding streams or in-kind support; and,
- suggest outcome targets based on available data against which success of the plan can be measured.

All Real Jobs Partnerships that receive Partnership award funding will be expected to submit a Comprehensive Plan within one year, or prior to submitting requests for additional funding through Real Jobs RI. A Comprehensive Plan describes the Partnership's vision for the industry sector and the necessary steps to achieve this vision. As the Partnership evolves, we expect additional workforce solutions will be created. Real Jobs RI Advisors will assist partnerships in the development of their Comprehensive Plan. DLT has established administrative processes and procedures to fund subsequent training proposals and plans developed by the Partnership.

### C. Requirements of a Real Jobs RI Workforce Solution

Partnership award funds will support a partnership's workforce solution. Support will always be tied back to a plan developed by the partnership.

Workforce solutions that form the core of Real Jobs RI are finite, measurable, and perspicuous; i.e. they involve a specific number of employers, who have a need for a specific number of employees and have target pipelines of potential employees who need a specific intervention to be ready to work for those specific employers. It is the perspicuity of these plans that allows the state, the intermediary and the employers to measure their efficacy.

These solutions must be "industry-led." This does not mean that industry representatives host all meetings; rather, the overall process has true business focus and leadership. DLT will require evidence in the proposal that multiple employer partners were active participants in developing the workforce solution(s) proposed. For examples of industry-led partnerships, please go to the Real Jobs RI web page at [www.DLT.ri.gov/realjobsri](http://www.DLT.ri.gov/realjobsri).

A good workforce solution must be both data-driven and experience-driven. Examples include using BLS/LMI data, industry skills gap studies, and data collection methods such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, roundtable discussions, etc.

Plans for workforce solutions are expected to have the explicit goal of training a workforce for existent, or soon-to-be existent, positions. **Successful plans will lead to program participants being hired or promoted by employer partners as a result of training or intervention.** Examples are as follows:

- 1) *Training in in-demand skills for jobseekers*, identified by employer partners (e.g., machining, medical billing, IT, sales, customer service training).
- 2) *Career advancement strategies for incumbent workers* (e.g., a course that gives existing entry-level workers training to move up the career ladder and increase their responsibility and earnings). Incumbent worker training should lead to internal promotions, wage increases and new job openings that can be back-filled by job seekers.
- 3) *Work readiness training* that assists and supports low-skilled or unskilled jobseekers in overcoming individual barriers to employment, and helps them develop the skills necessary to maintain employment and qualify for skills training opportunities. It can include occupational skills development, literacy development, and financial stability services including financial coaching, credit counseling, transportation and child care. Work readiness training must be directly connected to the skill needs of employer partners, and the participants must be on a direct path to employment in that industry.
- 4) *Other solutions for issues impacting the ability to hire workers*. These could include consolidating occupation descriptions across industry, addressing recruitment challenges, developing new screening processes, developing new curriculum due to a lack of available or effective training, etc.

**Each plan for a workforce solution should have, at a minimum, these components:**

- 1) **Training Activities:** The Partnership has designed a solution to a pain point in the industry. It is clear how each component of the activity is a part of the solution, whether it is skills training for job seekers or incumbent workers; a human resources issue; demographic challenges with an aging or changing workforce; individual and/or structural barriers preventing prospective employees from obtaining employment and/or preclude the industry from finding qualified candidates; etc. Please explain how employers were involved in the creation of the industry solution and how they will participate in the implementation and evaluation of it.

- 2) **Recruitment Strategy:** A strong plan decides on a specific strategy, knows what success looks like, and devises measures to gauge success along the way. For example, a plan might recruit deep into underserved communities through a solid collaboration with a community-based organization, an adult learning program, the local department of social services, or some combination thereof. A strong plan may have partners from the region’s career and technical education programs to enhance career readiness, may include recruiting pipelines to upskill or retrain the long-term unemployed or veterans, or may rely on partners. Please explain how employers were actively in the creation of the recruitment requirements or strategy and the selection of participants.
- 3) **Job Placement/Advancement Strategy:** Partnership success will be measured, in part, by how many jobs its participants obtain with employer partners. A workforce solution devises a method for ensuring employment for its participants while also providing the employers with employees that meet their workforce needs. A strong plan outlines job placement techniques for job seekers and requirements for advancement for incumbent workers. Examples of placement strategies include: hiring before training begins, with hiring being possible because of the existence of the Real Jobs RI training program; employer participation in recruitment; employer participation during training; commitments to interview; etc.

While not required, it is encouraged that prospective applicants consider supportive services as part of their overall workforce solution. Supportive services benefit participants by helping them complete training through support from transportation, child care, etc.; case management services; résumé and career services; and/or, assistance with other benefit programs. Supportive services can include transitional services that the participant receives when they are hired by an employer partner.

#### D. Funding Stream and Authority

This award is being funded by the Governor’s Workforce Board pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws § 42-102-6(e)1.

The authority for the award of funding is not governed by the provisions, otherwise, of Rhode Island Procurement Regulations Section 1 et seq. pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws § 37-2-13. Instead this award is being solicited under Section 10 of the Rhode Island Procurement Regulations pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws § 37-2-13, “Expenditures that are not Procurements.” DLT’s justification for use of this authority, as well as the internal procedures it will use to make decisions for this program, are posted on the Real Jobs RI website.

## II. Award Information

#### A. Available Funding and Number of Awards

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a request that does not exceed \$150,000. The number of awards will be determined by the competitive process and the available funding. All contract awards are subject to the availability of funds and the execution of a Partnership Agreement and a Contract that is acceptable to both the selected respondent and DLT.

#### B. Award Duration and Timeline

The contract period for the Real Jobs Partnerships established will be from **January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022**, with an option to renew for an additional two years. After receiving an initial award through this solicitation process, awardees may apply for additional funding to repeat successful activities, or to address other workforce needs within their respective industry or region. Additional funds will be awarded based on factors including available funds and partnership performance.

Partnership awards will be announced **Friday November 13, 2020** and activities will begin **January 1, 2021**.

Approved Partnerships will be eligible for additional funding opportunities available only to Real Jobs Partnerships.

### C. Program Director

The sole point of contact in the state, for purposes of this Solicitation for management of all awards, is the Real Jobs RI Program Director at the address listed below:

Julie O'Connell  
RI Department of Labor and Training  
1511 Pontiac Avenue  
Cranston, RI 02920-4407  
E-mail: Julie.Connell@dlt.ri.gov

The Department may change the Program Director or delegate the duties of the Program Director to others at any time by written notice.

### D. Pre-Proposal Conference

A virtual pre-proposal conference will be held on Tuesday September 15, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EST. Interested parties must register in advance at [Janet.Pratt@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:Janet.Pratt@dlt.ri.gov). All Conference-related materials and answers to questions addressed at the Pre-Proposal Conference or submitted via email will be posted to the Real Jobs RI website at <https://dlt.ri.gov/realjobsri/> by Friday October 2, 2020.

### E. Proposal Due Date and Time

Proposals must be submitted electronically (pdf proposal - budget submitted via excel) to Julie O'Connell at [julie.oconnell@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:julie.oconnell@dlt.ri.gov) no later than 4:00 p.m. EST on Friday November 13, 2020, to be considered. If the proposal submission is mailed it must also be received at the address listed on the Key Information Summary Sheet, by the closing date and time.

Proposals may not be hand-delivered nor submitted by fax.

## III. Eligibility and General Information

### A. Eligible Lead Applicants

The Lead Applicant is the lead contact and administrator for all Real Jobs RI-related activities. The Lead Applicant may be any of the following:

- Employer;
- Nonprofit organization;
- Two- and/or four-year institution of higher education;
- Local Workforce Board;
- Industry association;
- Labor union;
- Local government; or,
- Local or regional economic development entity

## B. Required Partnership Structure

At least five employers from the target industry and representatives from two strategic partners must be identified in the Partnership Proposal and committed to participating in the workforce solution. Strategic partners include nonprofits, community-based organizations, two- and/or four- year institutions of higher education, K-12 programs, local workforce boards, industry associations, local governments, local or regional economic development agencies, labor unions, philanthropic organizations, and other training providers and relevant partners.

An entity may be a member of more than one Real Jobs Partnership.

## C. Required Partner Roles

All Real Jobs Partnership members should be aware of the goals, outcomes, and responsibilities set forth in their proposal. Real Jobs Partnerships must sign an Award Agreement and Contract that clearly lay out the structure and management of the award and workforce solution the partnership has planned. It will include the roles and responsibilities, financial commitments and contributions and the expectations of each member.

### **Lead Applicant**

The Lead Applicant will be responsible for implementing the Partnership's workforce solution funded by Real Jobs RI, performance reporting, and designing and executing the Comprehensive Plan. It is important that the Lead Applicant have the capacity to conduct ongoing management and administration of the Partnership to meet performance targets and achieve goals.

### **Convener**

Each Partnership must designate a Convener. The Convener is an individual or organization that has credibility within the target industry and the trust of a diverse set of program partners. The ideal Convener will have the credibility and discipline to let industry partners set their own agenda and chart the course for the partnership, while balancing the interests of all potential partners. The Convener may also reach out to potential partners and/or play a critical project management role, including managing activities, logistics, and outreach.

For the purposes of the Partnership proposal, the Lead Applicant may, but need not, be the Convener.

### **Fiscal Agent**

The Fiscal Agent will be responsible for expense reporting, receipt of funds, and the disbursement of funds to appropriate entities. It is important that the Fiscal Agent have the capacity to manage funds and maintain fiscal records.

For the purposes of the Partnership proposal, the Lead Applicant may, but need not, be the Fiscal Agent.

### **Employer Partners**

Employer members of the Real Jobs Partnership are expected to make specific contributions and performance commitments to support the Partnership and implementation of the workforce solution. Commitments may include financial and in-kind contributions, including but not limited to, providing staff time, faculty or subject matter experts, facilities, data analysis, on-the-job-training, supplies, etc. Commitments are also strongly encouraged to include interviewing successful training participants and hiring participants for existing jobs vacancies.

### **Strategic Partners**

Other Real Jobs Partnership members are also expected to make specific commitments and contributions to support the Partnership and implementation of the workforce solution. The goal of the business-led partnerships is to develop industry-specific workforce solutions that address labor supply and demand to hire a skilled workforce.

Any training providers that will be utilized in the implementation of a planned workforce solution should be participating members of the partnership.

#### D. Training Activities and Training Providers

If a workforce solution includes proposed training that clearly requires approval or certification from any state or national entity, such as training that will result in a national certificate or college credit, proof of approval will be required.

In the event that, subsequent to proposal submission, it is determined that approval is required, DLT will work with such Real Jobs Partnerships and the regulatory entity on a case-by-case basis to address the approval process.

Prior to the disbursement of funds, DLT reserves the right to request additional information about any Faculty or Training Provider.

#### E. Leveraged Resources

Leveraged resources are not required, however, they are encouraged as evidence of partner commitment.

#### F. Targeted Industry Sector and/or Region

Real Jobs RI requires that applicants identify a targeted industry sector and/or region. They are defined as:

- **Industry Sector:** A group of employers closely linked by a common product or service, workforce skills, similar technologies, supply chains or other economic ties. Target industry sectors, for the purposes of Real Jobs RI, are well described by what the state's economic development strategy calls "clusters." Developed on behalf of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, *Rhode Island Innovates*, and its follow-up report *Rhode Island Innovates 2.0*, identified the following industry clusters and business concentrations:
  - Software Systems and Internet
  - Instruments, Electronics and Defense
  - Advanced Business Services
  - Health and Life Sciences
  - Marine, Materials, and Machinery
  - Design, Consumer Products, and Food Manufacturing
  - Arts, Education, Hospitality, and Tourism
  - Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

- The Blue Economy
- Offshore Wind
- 'Back Office' Operations

An industry sector can be defined or linked by a common workforce need or skill set (Information Technology, for example, can be considered an industry sector even though it cuts across numerous other defined sectors). Regardless of the defining feature, all target industry sectors identified by applicants that are validated by data analysis and regional experience will be given equal consideration.

- **Region:** Region is a flexible term. It is not limited to geographic boundaries. Applicants have the flexibility to define a region, for example, by industry labor markets that are already known or understood, rough concentrations of populations, commuter patterns or industry hubs. It can be across Local Workforce Development Areas (“LWDAs”) and geo-political boundaries, and even incorporate multiple economic development areas.

#### G. Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

All expenses to be paid using Real Jobs RI funds must be related to the workforce solution the partnership develops and its implementation. Eligible expenses may include reasonable project management costs. DLT may limit the percentage of funds that may be used for administrative or indirect costs, but recognizes the need for partnerships to build capacity to achieve broader workforce gains. The need for and reasonableness of all costs must be fully justified and detailed in the Budget Narrative (Appendix D).

Costs that are not allowable from Real Jobs RI funds may be allocated as direct support or an in-kind donation of a Real Jobs Partnership member.

Additional guidance on eligible and ineligible expenses will be provided to awardees.

## IV. Proposal Format and Submission Information

### A. How to Apply and Submission Requirements

Proposals must be submitted with all of the required completed elements. Those elements are:

- Cover Page – Appendix A
- Proposal Narrative – Appendix B
- Budget – Appendix C
- Budget Narrative – Appendix D
- Real Jobs Partnership List – Appendix E
- Lead Applicant Fiscal Assurances Form – Appendix F
- Fiscal Agent Assurances Form – Appendix G
- Fiscal Agent W-9 Form – Appendix H
- ACH Enrollment Form (optional) – Appendix I

Other documents to be submitted with the proposal are: training activity approval (if applicable), training syllabus/course outline/course description (if applicable), résumés of key partnership members, letters of intent from partners, and the most recent two years of the Lead Applicant’s and Fiscal Agent’s audited financial statements. Additionally, if the Lead Applicant is a non-profit organization, a copy of the 501(c)3 letter is required.

The Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative must be printed single-sided, use line spacing of at least 1.5 and 12-point font, have one-inch margins, use page numbers, and use tabs or another organizational method. The Proposal Narrative section may not exceed 25 pages. Charts may use single spacing and a 10-point font. Citations for specific data points should be included within the narrative as footnotes; no works cited page is required.

Two (2) originals and five (5) copies of the proposal should be submitted in hard copy, plus one electronic copy on a USB flash drive or CD. Standard size (8½" x 11") paper of regular weight should be used.

## B. Cover Page

This must be the first page of the submission packet and it includes important identifying information about the proposal. Please use the template provided in Appendix A.

## C. Table of Contents

The table of contents will list, in order, each component of the proposal and, at a minimum, break out the eight sections of the Proposal Narrative.

## D. Letter of Application

The Application Letter is from the Lead Applicant to the Program Director or the Director of the Department of Labor and Training formally submitting the proposal and briefly describing what the Real Jobs Partnership hopes to achieve with awarded funds.

## E. Proposal Narrative

The narrative must use the headings outlined below and be no more than 12 pages. You may use the template provided in Appendix B.

### I. Strategic Goals [1 page or less]

- a. Describe your Real Jobs Partnership's overarching strategy and the main goals of the workforce solution you are proposing. Please address:
  - i. Programmatic components and project activities.
  - ii. How the solution will address the target industry sector and/or region's workforce challenges.

### II. Target Industry Sector and/or Region [2 pages or less]

- a. Identify the target industry sector and/or region. How and why was it selected?
  - i. Provide data to support the selection of the target. For example, data and/or employer experience can demonstrate a shortage of skilled workers in the labor market within the target industry and/or region. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Data and the *Rhode Island Innovates* reports are two examples of additional sources.

### III. Assessment of Critical Workforce and Skill Needs [2 pages or less]

- a. Outline the critical workforce and skill needs of the employer partners in the Partnership’s target industry sector and/or region, and state which one the Partnership is targeting for this proposal. *It is not necessary to state all of the critical workforce and skill needs, only the one that the Partnership is targeting. However, if a Partnership knows that there are multiple critical needs, it may strengthen the proposal by showing the Partnership’s potential to emerge as a workforce intermediary for the industry.*
- b. Provide data to show evidence of the employer partners’ critical workforce and skills needs. This information could be obtained through varied collection methods, such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, roundtable discussions, etc.
- c. Describe the salary and skill level for the targeted occupations, and any potential for growth.
- d. If the identified critical workforce and skill needs relate to incumbent workers, describe how a lack of the identified skill will impede the target industry sector and/or region’s growth, slow future job advancement and/or an individual’s earning potential.
- e. If applicable, describe whether the occupations that the Partnership is targeting are specific high-demand occupations or sets of occupations at different skill and salary levels. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Data and the *Rhode Island Innovate* reports are two examples of sources.

**IV. Real Jobs Partnership Members [2 pages or less]**

- a. Identify the Lead Applicant.
  - i. Provide a brief description of the Lead Applicant’s mission, years in operation, legal structure (for profit, non-profit, etc.) and how the organization is financed.
  - ii. Explain why the lead applicant was selected. This could contain information on experience with other projects of a similar type, scale and complexity; serving in a similar capacity in previous projects; and/or, knowledge of the industry.
  - iii. Attach the last two years of the Lead Applicant’s most recently audited financial statements, if available.
- b. Identify the Convener and the Convener’s role in this particular partnership.
  - i. Brief explanation as to why the Convener is well suited for this role.
  - ii. The letter of intent from the Convener must acknowledge the specific role and/or tasks.
- c. Identify the Fiscal Agent (*if different from the Lead Applicant*).
  - i. Brief explanation as to why the Fiscal Agent is well suited for this role.
  - ii. The letter of intent from the Fiscal Agent must acknowledge the specific role and/or tasks.
  - iii. Attach the last two years of the Fiscal Agent’s most recently audited financial statements, if available.
- d. Identify key members of the Real Jobs Partnership.
  - i. Brief description of the partnership member, what they bring to the emerging partnership, and what their role will be in implementing the workforce solution.
- e. Complete the “Real Jobs Partnership List” (Appendix E).
- f. Provide letters of intent from each member of the Real Jobs Partnership. These letters should show that the member is an active partner and committed to the partnership.

**V. Workforce Solution Plan [4 pages or less]**

- a. **Workforce Solution Activities:** Describe the activities the Partnership will undertake to address the identified workforce skill needs in the target sector and/or region. Identify

the number and type of participants (e.g. jobseekers, incumbent workers, interns, or youth) to be served. What strategies (such as training and placement) will be utilized? The Partnership member(s) responsible for oversight and/or implementation of each activity should be identified.

- b. **Recruitment Strategy:** Describe the partnership's participant recruitment strategies. Will a specific partner fulfill this role? Are target groups identified? How will participants be screened? Did employer partners endorse the strategy?
- c. **Supportive Services:** Briefly describe any supportive services, if applicable, and how the supportive services contribute to the outcomes the partnership hopes to achieve.
- d. **Training Curriculum/Service Program:** Identify the skills participants will gain, credentials or certifications to be awarded, length and/or hours of training, name of training provider, expected outcomes, etc., for each training activity. You may attach a syllabus, course outline or course description, if applicable.
  - i. Identify whether a training activity requires the approval of any regulatory or licensing entity. If so, please attach evidence of approval and/or steps taken to receive approval.
- e. **Job Placement/Advancement:** Briefly describe job placement and/or advancement strategies and activities. Describe quantitatively the job placement or career advancement outcomes expected. Are employers in the Partnership committed to hiring or advancing participants?

**VI. Organizational, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity [1 page or less]**

- a. Briefly describe how the Lead Applicant has the capacity to properly and effectively manage the project and comply with all performance and program reporting requirements. The Lead Applicant will also be required to complete the Lead Applicant Assurance Form (Appendix F).
- b. Briefly describe how the Fiscal Agent has the capacity to properly and effectively manage funds and submit timely and accurate expense reports. The Fiscal Agent will also be required to complete a Fiscal Agent Assurances Form (Appendix G) and the Fiscal Agent W-9 Form (Appendix H).
- c. Describe the current governance structure for the Partnership (e.g. decision-making process, committee structures, specific mechanisms for industry input, etc.).
- d. Identify the person or persons primarily responsible for implementing the planned workforce solution and their qualifications for carrying out that role, as well as which partner organization they work for. Please attach résumés for each person identified.
- e. Note any plans to work towards the sustainability of the Partnership in the absence of state funding.

## F. Budget and Budget Narrative

A proposed budget should be submitted that includes a brief description of each budget item and what role the item will play in the execution of the award. Please use the template provided in Appendix C.

The need for and reasonableness of all costs must be fully justified and detailed in the Budget Narrative. You may use the template provided in Appendix D.

## V. Proposal Review and Selection

### A. Proposal Award Review Process

Department staff will perform an initial screening of applications to ensure that submission requirements are met and all required sections are included. **Applications not meeting all submission requirements or delivered after the listed due date and time may be found to be nonresponsive and not considered.** Applicants who are the subjects of Department enforcement actions or proceedings may be disqualified from consideration pending resolution of the matter.

A Review Committee will review applications. The committee will be composed of representatives from DLT and other state agencies. Mirroring the structure of the Proposal Submission, reviewers will be directed to consider, among other factors, the following:

#### Real Jobs Partnership Members

- Is there a clear and cogent rationale for the selection of the Lead Applicant, Convener, Fiscal Agent and other partners?
- Does the Lead Applicant have the ability to fulfill its role?
- Is the Convener credible, objective, and does he or she have knowledge of the industry and industry players?
- Do Letters of Intent from Partnership members reflect what is written in the proposal and show an understanding of their role and engagement in the process?

#### Strategic Goals

- Is the strategy and goal of the Partnership clearly articulated?
- Does it make sense?

#### Target Industry Sector and/or Region

- Does the proposal provide clear definition of the target industry sector and/or region, and describe how and why it has been identified?
- Is sufficient data or employer intelligence provided to demonstrate that the target industry sector and/or region is growing and/or in need?
- Are employers in the emerging partnership closely linked by a common product or service, workforce skills, similar technologies, or other economic ties?

#### Assessment of Critical Workforce and Skill Needs

- Does the proposal clearly identify barriers or pain points for the employer partners from the identified target industry sector and/or region?

- Is sufficient data or employer intelligence provided to demonstrate that there is a critical need for the employer partners?
- Is the critical occupation middle to high skill, or lead to a pathway to higher wage jobs?

#### Workforce Solution Plan

- Does the planned workforce solution directly relate to the Partnership’s goal, vision, and the assessment of the employer partners’ workforce and skill needs?
- If applicable, is training activity approval attached?
- Does the proposal outline a clear and cohesive strategy for recruitment?
- Does the proposal have a concrete strategy for job placement and/or advancement?
- Do supportive services, if identified, complement the proposal and benefit the participants?
- In a solution related to “pipeline” development, are there robust K-12 partners identified as committed to the solution?

#### Organizational, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity

- Have the Lead Applicant and Fiscal Agent demonstrated the administrative and fiscal capacity to properly and effectively manage funds and submit timely and accurate expense reports and meet program reporting requirements?
- Does the proposal include well-thought out and intentional action steps outlining how the Partnership is going to work collaboratively?
- If identified, are the persons whose résumés are attached qualified for the work they are assigned to complete?

#### Budget and Budget Narrative

- Are the expenses listed in the budget reasonable, allowable, and reflective of the proposal?
- [For enhanced consideration, not required] Does the proposal include leveraged resources and/or in-kind contributions from employer partners of other members of the Partnership?

#### Other Factors

- Is there an identified need shortage or need within the state?
- Are the proposed activities unique or novel?
- Do the proposed activities reflect recognized best practices?
- Are the proposed activities scalable?
- Are there other compelling reasons to fund the proposal?

## B. Proposal Award Selection Process

If necessary, oral presentation of the proposal may be required to clarify content in the proposed plan.

DLT may suggest that proposals be combined to maximize and advance efforts of an industry to address workforce supply and demand.

Final approval for each award shall be determined by the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, based on the recommendations of the Review Committee and taking into account other factors, such as geographic distribution and industry diversity.

Upon request, DLT will provide feedback on proposals that do not receive funding.

## VI. Administration and Reporting

### A. Post-Award Procedure

Upon award, the Partnership and Department will enter into a Partnership Agreement that establishes a legal relationship. Subsequent to this Agreement, the Partnership will then work with a Real Jobs RI Advisor to draft and finalize a Contract. The Contract will lay out and finalize the Partnership's scope of work, budget, payment terms, performance metrics, and reporting requirements. No activities may begin until the Contract is completed and signed by all parties, unless approved by DLT in writing.

Applicants may be initially approved as Partnerships without immediate approval of their proposed workforce solution plan. In these instances, the Partnership, through its lead applicant, will be invited to meet with a Real Jobs RI Advisor to make adjustments to the proposed workforce solution. Proposals submitted subsequent to this process will be reevaluated for funding.

The Department will host an Orientation that all awarded Partnerships must attend.

There may be site visits and/or programmatic and fiscal audits during and after the contract period.

### B. Role of the Real Jobs RI Advisor

Real Jobs RI Advisors will be closely engaged with all Real Jobs Partnerships, providing plan-specific support and technical assistance. This support includes, but is not limited to, site visits and regular meetings between Lead Applicants, partners, and staff responsible for implementing the workforce solution; reporting and performance tracking; drafting the Comprehensive Plan; and, invoicing. Advisors will work with Partnerships to highlight accomplishments of training programs and may develop and implement technical assistance plans for outcomes that are not reached or to assist in the improvement of progress toward Partnership goals.

### C. Payment Options

Awards will be disbursed according to a schedule determined by the Department with the input of the Partnership, and may be conditioned upon meeting program requirements. This could include, but is not limited to, submitting complete and accurate enrollment packets before training begins and/or meeting negotiated performance metrics. Failure to timely meet identified requirements and deadlines could result in delay, diminution, or termination of funding.

Invoices from Partnerships will not be paid and funds will not be disbursed unless expense reports are submitted correctly, with all of the appropriate supporting documentation. The Department's invoicing procedures will be reviewed in detail at the Orientation.

### D. Participant Data

All awardees must provide specific data about each participant enrolled in a training program and/or activity. These data points include, but are not limited to: first and last name, address, Social Security number, level of educational attainment, and basic information about current employment status.

At the conclusion of an activity, Partnerships must submit an Employment Report for each participant who becomes employed. Data points on this form include, but are not limited to: the participant's first and last name, employer name, date of hire, and the participant's starting wage; additional data elements identified by the Department or Partnership may also be required.

As awardees will necessarily collect personal information from participants as well as other potentially confidential or proprietary information from employer partners, it is expected that awardees will regard electronic data and other manually maintained records on individual persons, employers, and others as confidential, to be held in trust, and will protect data against unauthorized disclosure and/or use. The Department reserves the right to require the Partnership, or any funding recipient, to identify and describe its data protection plan and policies. The Department may, at its discretion, prescribe a data protection plan or system for use by the Partnership or any funding recipient. Failure to adhere to such a plan may result in delay, diminution, or termination of funding.

#### E. Performance Metrics

Partnerships will be held to certain measures that are common across all programs. However, additional, Partnership-specific metrics will be developed during the Contract negotiation to capture the unique features and proposed goals of each Partnership. These unique performance metrics will allow the Department to track the Partnership's progress, collaborate with the Partnership and other stakeholders to encourage open lines of communication, enhance accountability, improve results, and adjust program delivery and policy.

Performance metrics include, but are not limited to: the number of participants enrolled in an activity; the number of participants who successfully complete the activity; the number of participants who become employed; data on other Partnership activities; and, for incumbent worker training, employer and participant surveys.

Each Partnership's performance will be publicly available.

Funding may be tied to the achievement of performance metrics.

#### F. Reporting Requirements

Formatting and frequency of reporting is negotiated in the Contract. The Department seeks to develop a simplified and streamlined reporting system to make the reporting process as straightforward and efficient as possible.

#### G. Comprehensive Plan

In addition to executing the agreed upon activities in the Contract and following all program reporting requirements, the Partnership will, by the conclusion of the first year of funding, create a Comprehensive Plan.

Real Jobs RI recognizes that it is crucial for the economic future of the State of Rhode Island to make strategic investments in the capacity of business-led Partnerships to address workforce supply and demand. Having a well-functioning workforce network with identifiable intermediaries capable of "moving at the speed of business" will bolster Rhode Island's economic growth.

In a Real Jobs Comprehensive Plan, the Partnership, in consultation with their Real Jobs RI Advisor, will contemplate its mission and the capacity it believes it can or should strive to reach. These plans will be public (posted on the DLT website), and are meant to develop specific goals for the future. In other words, within the Comprehensive Plan, the Real Jobs Partnership will capture in writing the work it seeks to do over a given period of time. The Comprehensive Plan lays the groundwork for future workforce solutions that may be proposed by the Partnership, and may justify DLT investments in the capacity of intermediaries so that numerous solutions can be achieved across a sector.

## H. Program Evaluation

As a condition of funding, all Real Jobs Partnership members must be willing to participate in any Department-initiated or third-party evaluation commissioned by DLT. Participation may include providing data and/or participating in surveys and interviews. Failure or refusal to participate in such an evaluation may result in delay, diminution, or termination of funding.

## I. Additional Funding

Already approved and competitively-solicited Real Jobs Partnerships have the ability to request additional funds to expand, repeat, or introduce new training program activities, or other workforce solutions, consistent with their approved workforce solution. These requests are called a “PITCH” and the ability to request pitches for future solutions is the core of the Real Jobs RI program.

Applications for additional funds are reviewed based on a set of criteria, including but not limited to: evidence of demand, the extent to which the proposal presents a sound strategy, the potential number of individuals trained and/or hired; and the inclusion of clear and measurable performance goals.

Requests for additional funding, or pitches, will be reviewed by a team of evaluators with final approval by the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, based on these criteria as well other factors, such as geographic distribution, industry diversity, economic and workforce market conditions, the potential for state and sector economic growth, and the populations served.

If a partnership is awarded additional funds, they must then complete a new Contract.

## J. Right to Revoke Funding, Audit and Suspend Funds

DLT reserves the right to revoke funding from the recipient entity of any award and require the return of unspent funds if the goals and timelines consistent with the approved Contract(s) are not met.

DLT also reserves the right to request access to perform an audit of partnership activities. Audits can be part of regular monitoring or in response to an emergent concern, including but not limited to, outside inquiries or even “whistleblower” complaints. In order to meet its fiduciary responsibility for public funds, DLT reserves the right to suspend payment of any part of a Real Jobs RI award.

**To download all appendices, please visit** <https://gwb.ri.gov/workforce-partner-resources>