

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

REAL JOBS RHODE ISLAND CASE STUDY:

Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island

Prepared for:

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Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island

Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI)

In 2015, The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) awarded funding to workforce development collaborations throughout the state. Funding was provided through development grants to create sector-based partnerships and create a plan to provide workforce training aimed at sector needs. Implementation funding was then provided for these partnerships to develop training materials and train workers in Rhode Island in targeted industries including healthcare, technology, marine trades, and the arts. Sector partnerships were developed through public-private partnerships that included industry, workforce intermediaries, and educational institutions to address the economic needs of the state.

I. Sector Need

The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island (LDPRI) participated in the Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program to develop leadership training for the state's manufacturing industry. The partnership was initially formed by Toray Plastics and Astro-Med and various other companies in the manufacturing industry, including Taco Comfort Solutions, Teknor Apex, and Nordson EFD. The LDPRI also included the University of Rhode Island's (URI) Center for Human Services, URI's College of Continuing Education, and the Rhode Island Manufacturing Association. The partnership was formed for the following reasons:

- Employees in the manufacturing industry have the technical skills necessary to excel at manufacturing duties, but lack the leadership training and soft skills necessary to be successful supervisors or managers. As such, many companies struggled to find and retain skilled leaders, such as supervisors and managers, among their own employees.
- The lack of leadership skills among newly promoted leaders caused them to become frustrated and unhappy with their jobs and so they returned to hourly work or left their company entirely.
- The manufacturing industry faced substantial skills gaps among its employees that prevented them from being prepared for first-line management.
- Manufacturing industry leaders were retiring and were not being replaced.

II. Grant History

Toray Plastics was the lead applicant for the LDPRI's Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) grant application. The company is a developer and manufacturer of plastics technology located in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Toray Plastics has participated in numerous state government sponsored workforce development grant programs before, including the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) Express Grant program, Incumbent Workforce Grant program, the Paid Internship

for RI College Students - RI Work Immersion program, and the Workforce Partnership of Greater RI's On the Job Training Grant program.

During the planning stage conducted under a Real Jobs RI planning grant, Toray Plastics and the newly formed LDPRI worked with the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association to conduct an industry-wide survey of needed competency areas in the Rhode Island manufacturing industry. They discovered through the survey that many industry employers were confident that enough qualified employees existed to meet the demands of the fast-growing manufacturing industry. Further, the survey identified numerous Human Resource issues within the manufacturing industry, including: excessive turnover; a long recruiting time due to a lack of qualified candidates; a lack of assessment tools to quickly identify skills gaps; the excessive costs and inconveniences associated with existing training programs; a lack of internal or external trainers; and a lack of formal career development plans for employees. Lastly, the survey identified the following skills gaps in the manufacturing industry: a lack of consistent training for incumbent workers across the industry; a lack of worker knowledge in manufacturing management; a lack of computer skills; and a lack of communication, leadership, and coaching skills among workers. As a result, the partnership focused its training program on delivering conflict resolution skills, leadership skills, and skills related to transitioning from peer to leader.

III. Goals and Objectives

The LDPRI established two specific goals that were designed to prepare emerging leaders for first-line leadership positions, support and retain first-line leaders in the manufacturing industry, and support the manufacturing industry through an imminent period of growth and expansion:

1. Create a comprehensive, competency-based leadership training program to train incoming or inexperienced employee leaders.
 - The partnership designed this program to provide employees with new career-enhancing skills and companies with skilled new leaders to help manage their businesses.
2. Recruit and train senior leaders to act as industry mentors for new leaders.
 - The partnership offered a Mentor Training Program to fulfill this goal.

Both of these goals were designed to enhance employee development and succession planning. Through these leadership training programs, the LDPRI expected to both increase the skills and success of industry employees and help increase retention, thus keeping newly skilled workers employed within the industry. Additionally, the LDPRI expected that equipping incumbent workers with enhanced management and leadership skills would allow companies to promote within and, therefore, increase the number of entry-level positions available to newly recruited workers.

IV. Partnerships

The LDPRI is composed of industry partners, professional associations, and training providers. Toray Plastics spearheaded the founding of the partnership out of its desire to develop a leadership training program for its own employees. Toray Plastics used the DLT's RJRI internet directory to connect with Astro-Med, another company in the manufacturing industry that was interested in developing a leadership training program.

Once Toray and Astro-Med decided to collaborate on a leadership training program together, they both began working with URI's Center for Human Services to develop a curriculum. The original partner companies were joined by Taco Comfort Solutions, Teknor Apex, and Nordson EFD. This partnership then worked with the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association to execute an industry-wide needs survey. Finally, URI's College of Continuing Education TALENT Project Team, in collaboration with URI's Center for Human Services, were chosen to deliver a customized training curriculum that addressed the specific needs of leaders in the manufacturing industry.

While the planning and implementation process was underway, two partners stopped attending meetings and participating in implementation efforts, causing the number of partners involved in the LDPRI to decline. Yet, the remaining partners consisting of Toray Plastics, Astro-Med, Taco Comfort Solutions, the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association, and URI remained committed to the program, and through their shared vision were able to make the partnership a successful one. The remaining partners understood that in order to preserve this core partnership and to minimize the amount of time each partner spent on the training programs, meetings needed to be limited. Partner meetings were held once per month and were limited to a few hours, while the rest of the planning and communication required to execute the grant occurred over phone and email. In 2017, the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association left the partnership due to internal reorganization, but the partnership expanded to include Dominion Diagnostics as an additional partner employer.

Table 1: Partnership Members and Responsibilities

<p>Toray Plastics</p>	<p>Lead Applicant: Responsible for referring participants to the training program and offering access to the company’s Innovation and Development Center for training; acting as Lead Applicant and Fiscal Agent, including the duties of managing and documenting grant expenditures, disbursements, submitting financial reports for the grant, managing the grant, and all aspects of implementation.</p>
<p>Astro-Med Inc. d/b/a AstroNova (Astro-Med)</p>	<p>Responsible for referring participants to the training program; using the Innovation and Development Center for training; attending regular meetings to assess and plan implementation.</p>
<p>Taco Comfort Solutions</p>	<p>Responsible for referring participants to the training program; using Innovation and Development Center for training; attending regular meetings to assess and plan implementation.</p>
<p>University of Rhode Island College of Continuing Education</p>	<p>Responsible for assisting in the design and implementation of competency-based leadership and mentoring training programs.</p>
<p>University of Rhode Island Center of Human Services</p>	<p>Responsible for project management; leading the development of a strategic plan; monitoring deliverables and results; promoting communication with partners and stakeholders; setting agendas for partner meetings; facilitating meetings; troubleshooting conflicts.</p>
<p>Rhode Island Manufacturers Association</p>	<p>Responsible for acting as convener and participant manager; orienting participants to the training program’s curriculum and goals; assisting in participant intake and follow-ups; administering needs assessments and evaluations; developing and implementing individual employment plans for participants; supporting participants in their current jobs; coordinating and facilitating job preparation services; managing the employer partnerships; managing meetings; providing counsel on the implementation of the grant and its curriculum.</p>

V. Implementation Activities and Processes

Goal #1: Create a comprehensive, competency-based leadership training program to train incoming or inexperienced employee leaders.

The LDPRI designed the Leadership Training Program to fulfill the goal of training incoming or inexperienced leaders in competency-based leadership. This training was designed to provide both employees with career-enhancing skills and employers with potential leaders to help manage their companies. The training was also designed to train employees with the qualifications needed to be prepared for promotion and advancement in the manufacturing industry.

This program was specifically designed to serve “emerging leaders,” a category that includes recently appointed leaders, potential leaders, or current leaders without any formal leadership or management training. The LDPRI allowed each partner company to decide which type of emerging leader would be receiving training. The selection of program participants was made possible through a participant screening tool based on a leadership competency framework developed by Korn Ferry International. It identified the core characteristics of employees with leadership potential so that the LDPRI could identify the best candidates for program participation. Since supervisors and Human Resource officers in partner companies were responsible for selecting program participants, this tool enabled supervisors to select and screen employees for potential participation in the Leadership Training Program or the Mentor Training Program (described below). Selected candidates were paired with a mentor upon starting the program, and were encouraged to meet with and learn from the mentor throughout the training program. Participants also received a mix of on-the-job training, classroom training, and mentoring that covered six modules over 12 weeks.

After completing the program modules, participants worked with their supervisors and mentors to design and execute an on-the-job training project at their company to reinforce the lessons taught in the program and received a Level 1 Leadership Certificate from URI after completing the program. This certificate also confers continuing education credits from URI to program graduates.

Table 2: Leadership Training Program Modules

Module	Curriculum Delivered
Understanding the Supervisory Role	Prepared participants for the transition from being a peer worker to being a supervisor.
Command Skills	Prepared participants for basic leadership, crisis management, and how to deliver unpopular news.
Managing and Measuring Work	Demonstrated how to set and communicate expectations, organize work, assign tasks, monitor progress, and track feedback.
Planning	Cultivated project management and team organization skills.
Motivating Others	Prepared participants for leadership and mentorship roles with their employee teams.
Managing Conflict	Participants learned how to recognize and defuse conflict, while also removing themselves emotionally from rising conflicts.

Goal #2: Recruit and train senior leaders to act as industry mentors for new leaders.

Execution of the Leadership Training Program required the recruitment and training of senior leaders to serve as mentors for training participants. To fulfill the goal of recruiting and training mentors, the LDPRI created the Mentor Training Program, which allowed training participants to learn from mentors outside of their own companies. In addition to the mentoring function of the program, another key component of the mentoring program was to create a broader Manufacturing Industry Leadership Mentoring Network with graduates from the training program.

Candidates for the Mentor Training Program were selected by supervisors and human resource officers from within their own companies. Over a period of six weeks, selected participants received 18 hours of training, six hours of support from a certified executive coach prior to being assigned a mentee, and were asked to mentor emerging leaders for up to a year. At the conclusion of training, mentors received a Leadership Mentor Certificate from the University of Rhode Island.

VI. Achievements

Partnerships

Program growth

The original training focused on manufacturing companies, but has now expanded to include companies that are indirectly related to manufacturing, such as jewelry companies. The LDPRI's extensive marketing and recruitment efforts included reserving tables at conferences and industry events, as well as sponsoring luncheons for companies that led to increased interest in enrollment among both companies and employees. With interest in the Mentor Training Program growing so rapidly during the first training session, the grantee added an additional cohort of mentor trainees to meet the demand.

Recruitment

Leadership training program graduates

While the Leadership Training Program recruitment lagged behind the expected performance goals of the LDPRI, 26 out of 27 participants who were recruited for training completed it and gained an industry-recognized credential, as well as continuing education credits.

Mentor training program support

The Mentor Training Program recruited 22 out of the expected 40 participants. There appears to be strong program buy-in among industry leaders. Of the 22 participants recruited into the program, all of them graduated from the program and received a certificate from URI for their participation. The certificate also conferred continuing education credits from URI to program graduates.

Trainee Barriers

The LDPRI did not discuss any achievements with trainee barriers.

Training

Program flexibility

The sector partners agree that the manufacturing industry was advanced as a whole because a customized leadership training curriculum was designed by URI that allowed individualized training to be made available to participants.

Transition from Training to Employment

The LDPRI did not discuss any achievements with the transition from training to employment.

Other

Utilizing feedback

Partners sought feedback to make changes and improvements to the program after each step of the training process. The partners believe that adapting the program would not have been possible without the curriculum's flexibility. On the basis of feedback from trainees, the partners made mentors available earlier in the training process so that emerging leaders were given greater access to mentorship resources during their training. Feedback from participants has been positive, especially with respect to the quality of the instructors delivering the training program.

Table 3: Performance Metrics for All Training Programs

Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island (IG-08)	Start Date of First Cohort	Proposed End Date for All Cohorts	Target Enrollment	Enrolled	Target Completed	Completed
Recruitment, Training, and Employment						
Mentoring Training & Practicum (2 cohorts) (Incumbents)	4/20/16	9/30/16	40	22	40	22
Leadership Development (2 Cohorts) (Incumbents)	6/8/16	12/22/16	40	27	40	26
Other Objectives						
Total Participants that earn a Certification					TBD	48*
Total Participants promoted due to training (Incumbent Workers Only)					TBD	Ongoing
Total Participants receiving an increased wage due to training (Incumbent Workers Only)					TBD	Ongoing
*All Leadership and Mentoring & Practicum participants who completed the program received certification as well as University credits.						

VII. Challenges

Partnerships

Difficulty expanding the partnership

The LDPRI faced significant difficulties in expanding the partnership. First, it sought out human resources departments as a point of contact in potential partner organizations, but found that most human resources departments were simply too overloaded with responsibilities to help make such connections. These departments were also constrained by their senior management's willingness to give the LDPRI the time and flexibility to help with the training program. Further, during the planning phase, the sector partnership met weekly and each partner was called upon to do a significant amount of planning and implementation work. Some partners believe that the high workload kept other companies from joining the LDPRI. The LDPRI struggled identifying companies that shared its commitment to leadership training and this may have prevented the LDPRI from expanding beyond its original partners.

Partner attrition

During LDPRI's implementation of the training programs, some partners stopped participating at meetings and in implementation efforts. As a result, these partners were asked to leave the partnership. The remaining partners chose not to work with the companies that lacked the commitment and the time required to build and maintain the program.

Recruitment

Leadership training recruitment

The partnership entered the implementation phase of the grant with high recruitment expectations, but struggled to convey the vision of the training program to others and to secure the participation of businesses. The LDPRI also learned that getting referrals of qualified participants from supervisors was challenging. This was due to supervisors not having the time to commit to learning about the program and institute a screening process of their employees. Due to confusion about the desired outcomes of the program and requirements of training participants, some of the initial referrals were not well-suited for training and needed to be removed from the program. This caused the partnership to fall short of its intended goals for the training program.

Mentor training recruitment

Recruiting individuals to participate in the mentoring program proved to be a challenge for the LDPRI because potential mentors already have demanding responsibilities and time commitments. Employers hesitated to send supervisors to mentor training because doing so meant that they would lose their supervisors to mentor training. These elements restricted the recruitment of possible mentor trainees.

Trainee Barriers

The LDPRI did not discuss any challenges with trainee barriers.

Coordinating mentors and mentees

Mentors from the Mentor Training Program were typically salaried, while mentees from the Leadership Training Program worked at an hourly rate. This made the scheduling of meetings between mentors and mentees difficult. This separation between mentor and mentee was further compounded by the fact that mentors completed training before being matched to a mentee, causing an awkward gap in the program for the mentors.

Participant time constraints

The LDPRI found that many participants hesitated to leave their jobs for the training sessions, especially when accommodating the training sessions required employers to modify shift schedules. Some program participants traded shifts with other workers so that they could attend training, but no official stipend existed for either of the training programs. Participants also experienced added pressure because they were required to miss no more than two sessions of the training. The partnership tied this strict requirement to the lower than expected enrollment of its training programs.

Training

Ensuring program completion

Ensuring that program participants completed their post-program on-the-job training proved challenging for the LDPRI. This portion of the training was guided by the participant's mentor, but completion of the requirement depended on the cooperation and enforcement of the participant's company supervisor. The LDPRI found that this portion of the training was not being completed by many participants. As a result, the LDPRI will be changing the structure of the training program by holding a graduation ceremony where participants are given their certificates after a three month period of on-the-job training that is overseen by mentors and program instructors. The LDPRI is also altering the on-the-job training portion of the training program to require a capstone project and presentation so that it can monitor the completion of the program.

Transition from Training to Employment

The LDPRI did not discuss any challenges with the transition from training to employment.

VIII. Sustainability

The partners expressed confidence in the sustainability of the program. The LDPRI's plan is to transition from a free service funded by RJRI grant funding to a tuition-based structure where employers pay a fixed price to have their employees trained. The LDPRI already knows

the per-person cost of training, and will execute a fundraising campaign so that employees from small businesses are able to receive scholarships to offset the cost of leadership training. The partnership's plan is to convene an advisory board consisting of representatives from the industry, the original partners, training providers, mentors, and training participants to assist in the transition and in the development and performance monitoring of the program, which can be sustainable even without RJRI funding.

Further, the LDPRI believes the program will be sustainable due to the program's overall vision. The partners strongly believe that all Rhode Island companies should develop leaders that are prepared to steer their industries into the future and the LDPRI's training program provides a model for how this can be achieved. The partners argue that allowing leaders from different companies to mix with one another, exchange ideas, and learn best practices will be critical to the long-term health of the manufacturing industry. The Mentor Training Program will make this possible by establishing a culture of lifelong learning in the manufacturing industry which will help experienced leaders learn new techniques and skills while also serving to revitalize their passion and interest in manufacturing by introducing them to the new faces of the industry.

IX. Lessons Learned

The following lessons were learned by the LDPRI in executing its training program:

- Offering additional trainings for employees who occupy the middle ground between “emerging leaders” and “mentors.”
- Training mentors and mentees at the same time, in the same place, and on the same day in order to allow more convenient meetings that meet the scheduling needs of both groups.
- Relying on alumni of the Mentor Training Program to share their experience with the LDPRI with their peers and recruit them to the LDPRI's training programs.
- Spreading out training sessions to allow for more time to absorb the information that was made available through the training program.
- Introducing an online component to the Leadership Training Program so that participants who miss classes can review the material.
- Moving the graduation ceremony to after participants have completed their on-the-job training to encourage program completion.
- Modifying the on-the-job training portion of the training program to require a capstone project and presentation so that completion of the program can be monitored by the LDPRI.

X. Best Practices

The following best practices were utilized by the LDPRI:

- Rely on direct supervisors of partner companies to select program participants to enable companies to train employees that had promotion potential.

- Maintain a committed core of partners that can focus on common goals, strategically make adjustments that make the fulfillment of these goals possible, and hold each of the partners accountable for individual effort.

XI. Recommendations

Based on the implementation successes and challenges for the Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Provide financial incentives for employees who need time off to participate.
- Establish a dedicated employer liaison within the partnership to help program participants negotiate time off or shift changes with their employer.
- Create safeguards against the possibility of trainee attendance problems caused by offering training materials online. Such safeguards could include:
 - Only offering online content in certain points in the curriculum to encourage attendance at a smaller number of in-class trainings where in-person training is absolutely critical.
- Assist partnerships in establishing a leadership team that can continuously monitor the performance of sector partners and allow the partnership to be more accountable and flexible in the execution of workforce development grants.