

THE
UNIVERSITY
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REAL JOBS RHODE ISLAND CASE STUDY:

Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership

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Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership

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 Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership (RIFMTP) was established by the Rhode Island Hospitality Association (RIHA) in collaboration with its sister organization, the Rhode Island Hospitality Education Foundation (RIHEF). RIHA received an RJRI planning grant, and the RIFMTP was designed to address the lack of leadership training programs for mid-level employees in the hospitality industry for the RJRI implementation grant. This partnership sought to address the following specific industry challenges:

- Over the next decade, the food cluster industry in Rhode Island is anticipated to experience strong growth.^{1,2}
- Employers in the food cluster industry face a deficit of skilled workers to fill management and supervisory level positions.
- Restaurants currently have difficulty retaining qualified, highly motivated employees because of a lack of opportunity for advancement and training. The turnover rate for employees in the restaurants and accommodations sector is high (63%) compared to the private sector overall (42%).³

To assess specific training needs, RIHA conducted one-on-one interviews and held six focus groups with more than 12 employers and 43 employees as part of its planning grant activities. Employers identified that specific training was needed for incumbent employees in the following areas:

- Managing and forecasting profitability.

¹ Actions for Economic Development, *Highlights 2014*,

http://www.rifoodcouncil.org/sites/default/files/CommerceRI_Highlights_Report_0.pdf#overlay-context=resources

² National Restaurant Association, *State Statistics 2015*. <http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/State-Statistics>

³ National Restaurant Association, *Economist's Notebook: Hospitality Employee Turnover Rose slightly in 2013*, March 20, 2014

- Managing team members.
- Managing information flow.
- Complying with legal requirements.
- Customer service.
- Managing a food and beverage program.
- Ensuring food safety and sanitation.
- Alcohol law.
- Conflict resolution and crisis management.

Employers stated that mid-level positions were identified as the most difficult to fill, because potential incumbent employees that could have been promoted required more training and skill development than employers were equipped to provide. Frequently, and out of necessity, employers would promote employees to mid-level positions who lacked the technical and skills training they needed to be managers and supervisors. Promoting employees without adequate knowledge often compromised the work environment, leading to difficulties in hiring and training entry level employees and often resulting in high turnover and poor morale within the organizations. Employers also reinforced the need for owners and managers to understand how to better assist employees in their career paths and how to adapt to the training needs of the new generation of workers.

Employees of the food cluster industry also indicated a need for training and skills development that included building resumes and taking part in interviews, career exposure, internship opportunities, supervision coaching, practical learning experiences, mentorship options, and interactive coursework. Employees discussed that few educational opportunities existed for those who desired to be promoted because few universities offered professional development opportunities within the food cluster industry, and tuition costs were often not manageable for a majority of the incumbent employees.

II. Grant History

Prior to RJRI, RIHA/RIHEF received grant funding from DLT as an industry partnership, and they also received funding through the Governor’s Workforce Board for 10 years prior to their involvement with RJRI. These grants enabled them to build the “foundation” of their organizations. Through these DLT grants, RIHA/RIHEF built relationships with all of the employers and education partners included on the Partnership’s RJRI grant. As a result, they were well-positioned to carry out both a planning grant and an implementation grant because they had an established partnership of employers and training organizations. RIHA/RIHEF has offered other trainings in the past, such as food safety and alcohol trainings, and they have also worked with high schools to implement programs for high school students in which students can receive certification for working in the food and hospitality industry.

III. Goals and Objectives

In order to meet the insufficient supply of managers in the food cluster industry the, Rhode Island Food Management Training Program established one goal for this training program.

1. Provide professional development, training, resources, and knowledge for career advancement to mid-level incumbent workers.
 - As part of this program, RIFMTP assessed applicants, helped to design individual employment plans, and provided training and support services.

Specifically, RIFMTP sought to meet the following recruitment and training objective:

- Recruit and provide 40 incumbent participants with training and support services.

IV. Partnerships

Members of the partnership were selected for participation based on their knowledge and experience in developing training and educational programs for incumbent workers; education in the food cluster industry and willingness to assist in the development of comprehensive professional development program for mid-level professionals in the food cluster industry; and the needs of employers and employees of the food cluster industry. The chart below details the partners and their specific responsibilities.

Table 1: Partnership Members and Responsibilities

<p>Rhode Island Hospitality Association</p>	<p>Responsible for all instruction and training for the entirety of the program; tracking student performance.</p>
<p>Rhode Island Hospitality Education Foundation</p>	<p>Responsible for all instruction and training for the entirety of the program; tracking student performance.</p>
<p>Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)</p>	<p>Responsible for expanding their existing culinary arts/food service curricula from a certificate program (CCRI) or a four-year program (JWU) into a formal two-year accredited Associate’s Degree program affiliated with RIFMTP; hosting training programs at its Warwick location (CCRI).</p>
<p>Hope and Main Incubator Kitchen</p>	<p>Responsible for providing classroom space to the Partnership and help to identify the emerging professional development needs of the food cluster industry; assisted in recruiting additional employers and employees.</p>
<p>RI Hospitality Education Foundation, National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, Chelo’s Hometown Bar & Grille, Chez Pascal, Gregg’s Restaurants & Pubs, Harbor Lights, Hotel Viking, Lucia Italian Restaurant, McGrath Clambakes, Meritage Restaurant, Ocean House, Omni Hotels & Resorts, Packaging & More, Panera Bread, Providence Marriott Hotel, Pt. Judith Country Club, Regan Communications, Simone’s Restaurant, T’s Restaurants, Tallulah on Thames, Vanderbilt Grace, Wyndham Garden Providence, Johnson & Wales University, Community College of Rhode Island, Workforce Solutions of Providence Cranston, Providence Cranston Workforce Investment Board</p>	<p>Responsible for referring employees to the training program.</p>

V. Implementation Activities and Processes

Goal # 1: Provide professional development, training, resources and knowledge for career advancement to mid-level incumbent workers.

Participant Identification and Action Plans

The RIFMTP identified participants from hospitality employer partners, human resource managers and directors, past Hospitality Training Academy graduates, assisted living and nursing home facilities, and business owners from the Hope & Main incubator kitchen. The plan for the screening process for applicants to the RIFMTP included attendance at an information session, a formal application, a letter of intent, a current resume, and a minimum of two recommendation letters from current or past employers. Once the applications were reviewed, a formal interview was scheduled with the Manager of Workforce Development and a volunteer group of employers. The final step was an orientation session followed by acceptance into the training program.

The RIFMTP adopted the Food and Beverage Service Competency Model as the measurement tool for identifying skill levels. Every incumbent worker designed an action plan, in conjunction with the hospitality career coach, tailored to their specific skills needs in order to improve behaviors that would facilitate opportunities for promotion. The partnership conceptualized the need for an additional action plan that would be used to build on the participants' accomplishments and further develop their skills and behaviors. The initial plan was for assessments to be conducted throughout the training program and beyond to track participant's career growth following their graduation from the program.

Training Program

Initially, the RIFMPT planned for each participant in the program to complete training in order to earn ManageFirst certification, endorsed by the National Restaurant Association. RIFMPT utilized the ManageFirst curriculum, a nationally accredited, competency-based training program that certifies a set of core competencies defined by the restaurant, foodservice, and hospitality industries as critical for success.⁴ To receive the ManageFirst certification, individuals must pass participate in training, pass four Core Credential Topic Exams and one Elective Topic Exam, and document 800 hours of paid or unpaid industry-related work experience.

The four core credential topics include:

- Hospitality and Restaurant Management.
- Controlling Foodservice Costs.
- Hospitality Human Resources Management and Supervision.
- ServSafe Food Safety.

⁴ ManageFirst was developed by the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation (NRAEF) with the collaboration of over 400 restaurant, foodservice and hospitality experts, and after a rigorous 18 month Job Task Analysis to identify the industries core competencies.

The options for elective topics include:

- Hospitality Accounting, Purchasing, Customer Service, Principles of Food and Beverage Management, Bar and Beverage Management, Hospitality and Restaurant Marketing, Nutrition, and ServSafe Alcohol.

The theory behind this type of incumbent training was that helping current employees advance in their careers within a company opens up entry-level jobs for new workers, creating a career ladder for employees within the food cluster industry. RIFMTP and employers jointly funded participants/employees to take part in the training program. Having RIFMTP share the cost helped limit the financial barriers for employers. The training required for the ManageFirst certification generally costs about \$4,500. RIFMTP initially asked for employers to pay \$750 of the cost of the training for their employees, but eventually changed it to \$250 to accommodate budget limitations.

RIFMTP provided the ManageFirst Curriculum certification as delineated in its RJRI implementation proposal to one cohort of five individuals. The Community College of Rhode Island provided space for the RIFMTP to hold the training program.

However, after encountering large barriers to recruiting people into the first cohort, RIFMTP altered its program to allow employers to request individual ManageFirst topics or other training topics that were needed to benefit their business and employees. For example, the impetus for changing to the new model (described as the “a la carte model”) came after one employer requested that five of their employees take the Hospitality and Restaurant Management class, another employer asked for the ServSafe alcohol class within the ManageFirst curriculum, and another employer requested training for their employees on controlling food service cost. RIFMTP changed its training program model to provide training topics upon employer request or based on industry needs, and participants could enroll in a single class at a time, with some classes held in-person and some online. In the case of the controlling food cost training, RIFMTP provided a webinar on this topic using curriculum from another nationally-recognized program. Trainees who took one class were not required to take part in the screening protocol or attend an information session.

Employer Engagement

To engage in the RIFMTP, employer partners referred their own employees to the training program, supported their employees once accepted into the program, and attended networking events and graduation ceremonies. For each participant, employers designated a supervisor or manager to mentor and to assist the participants in applying the knowledge from class and textbooks to their current jobs. This mechanism was designed to provide feedback on the student employee's performance and help to identify where further development would be needed. Over time, RIFMTP identified that the program has multiple levels in which employers can be become engaged. Some employers send many employees for their trainings, while others

do not send many employees but do make contributions towards the culinary programs, hire students from the programs, and send managers to RIFMTP-related networking events.

VI. Achievements

Partnerships

Creation of New Industry Connections

A major achievement of this RJRI grant has been the creation of new networks and the opportunity for RIHA/RIHEF to continue to be a part of the workforce system, including the Providence/Cranston Workforce Board or the greater Rhode Island Workforce Investment Board, and other various partnerships and groups that come together to improve the hospitality system within Rhode Island. These types of opportunities have led to a breadth of diverse projects. For example, RIHA/RIHEF staff attended a meeting in which they were connected with a representative from the Department of Health. This connection later led to a joint project in which RIHA/RIHEF conducted a training about the norovirus, and another project with Department of Health staff provided trainings on food safety inspections and audits to food service employees.

Furthermore, the RIFMTP enabled RIHA/RIHEF to continue their role within the sector as the convener of new partnerships by creating a culture of community within the food cluster industry. Thus, the ability to open doors for themselves and others was communicated as a worthy venture for the grantee, and that without RJRI funding, this would not have been possible.

Recruitment

Recruiting Incumbent Employees

The RIFMTP had success recruiting from employer partners and at networking events for incumbent worker trainings. RIFMTP was able to recruit from multiple types of organizations, including hospitality employer partners, human resource managers and directors, past Hospitality Training Academy graduates, assisted living and nursing home facilities, and business owners from the Hope & Main incubator kitchen. As a result of its activities, RIFMTP exceeded its initial recruitment goal.

Ability to Expand Training Partners

This model also allowed RIFMTP to expand its training opportunities to serve employers outside its initial partners. For example, RIFMTP became involved with healthcare industry employers, such as assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and hospitals, who need additional training for their food service workers. Although, these types of food service workers are not considered part of the food cluster industry, they often need the same types of training as restaurants and hospitality organizations. Partnering with these types of organizations was noted by RIHA/RIHEF as an unexpected but pleasant partnership, and one that could only grow over time.

Trainee Barriers & Training

Adaptability

One particularly successful element of this partnership was its ability to quickly adapt the training program to changing employer demands. For example, as desired by employers, RIHA/RIHEF initially proposed a lengthy 3-4 month ManageFirst certification program for employees. However, by the time the grant was actually funded and ready to implement, RIHA/RIHEF quickly learned that the lengthy program was no longer needed among employers. Incumbent worker training was still desired, but industry employers were unable to send their employees to a training program that required employees to train for approximately 10 full work days. Instead, particular employers expressed a desire to have their workers complete specific types of training, such as hospitality and restaurant management, and so they were willing to send their employees for the amount of time required to complete a specific class/module. As a result, RIFMTP developed an “a la carte” training model in which employers could flexibly send incumbent workers to specific trainings based on the specific skills needed for advancement at their workplace.

Flexible and Responsive Training Design

RIFMTP provided training for employers that was flexible and responsive to a changing business climate. For example, RIFMTP facilitated an active shooter training because hotels and restaurants are interested in training their employees on how to handle these types of situations, and it has also been involved in cyber-security training because when providing a Wi-Fi connection for their guests, restaurants and hotels need training on how to safely offer these services to guests while also protecting their own security.

Training Attendance

RIFMTP found that holding some trainings as webinars was helpful for ensuring employees could be trained without having to attend an in-person training during a time they might be working.

Transition from Training to Employment

This grant was specifically designed for incumbent employees already employed at these companies. As a result, all participants were already employed.

Other

Comprehensive Reporting System

The RIHA/RIHEF utilized a system of reporting objectives and outcomes for every project, event, and program that they conducted. Using this system enabled them to identify best practices and areas that were in need of revision or discarding based on short-term and longer-

term experiences. During implementation of the RIFMTP, this enabled RIHA/RIHEF to quickly adapt their training program when they encountered barriers.

VII. Challenges

Partnerships

The RIFMTP did not identify any partnership challenges.

Recruitment

Length of the Training Program

The amount of time that it would take for an employee to successfully complete the training program created a recruitment barrier. This was such a barrier that the RIFMTP was forced to restructure and re-conceptualize its training plan. The reality was that many employers were unable to send employees to the 3-4 month training program, and during this time, continue to pay them while also paying someone to complete the work of the person at the company (e.g., a restaurant). When many companies are only operating on slim profit margins, employers found that they were unable to send employees to the full training program. Small businesses are currently finding that it takes about five years to become successful, so during those initial five years (when they often need the most support and training), it can be nearly impossible to take employees “off the floor” to attend a training.

Slow Start to Recruitment

The RIFMTP had difficulty recruiting participants to the training program initially. It took the advocacy of program graduates to increase the recruitment numbers of subsequent cohorts.

Trainee Barriers

Overcoming Personal Barriers

Multiple training participants had to overcome personal barriers like lack of adequate day care or transportation to attend training sessions. These barriers were pronounced due to the partnership's focus on training incumbent workers. However, the partnership overcame this challenge by working with each participant to resolve their individual issues.

Training

Difficulty Gaining Necessary Participant Information

RIFMTP experienced obstacles in obtaining Social Security numbers and wage-related information from each of the training participants. A majority of training participants would skip that particular portion when completing the required form and as a direct consequence, the grantee would not receive reimbursement from RJRI for expenses related to these individuals, which was a serious constraint for them in terms of resources. In the food industry, RIHA/RIHEF explained that one program, ServSafe, had been sued for asking for people's

Social Security numbers due to identity theft, amongst other concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality, and therefore, many employees/participants were not willing to provide this information. Overall, RIFMP stated that it understood why it was required, but found the policy to be incredibly prohibitive and were having a difficult time determining a potential solution.

Training Cost

Employers found the cost of the training to be prohibitive. Though the RIFMTP was able to reduce the cost of the training program to be RIHA/RIHEF \$250 for employees, many employers found even this amount to be too much.

Transition from Training to Employment

This grant was specifically designed for incumbent employees already employed. As a result, all participants were already employed.

Other

Complex and Challenging Industry Regulations

The number of governmental regulations within the hospitality and food cluster industry is increasingly challenging, and employers spend large amounts of time working to ensure they are meeting all of the various regulations, which can make it difficult to send employees to take part in training.

Difficulty Meeting Recruitment Goals

Although RIFMTP was unable to meet the recruitment and training objectives for its program as initially proposed, the grantee did find the flexibility and room for innovation afforded to them through the RJRI grant process to enable RIFMTP's success in meeting important industry goals and employer needs. The table below details the number of trainees who took part in the various RIFMTP trainings during 2016:

Table 2. Performance Metrics for All Training Programs

IG-14 RI Food Management Training Partnership (RI Hospitality)	Start Date of First Cohort	Proposed End Date for All Cohorts	Target Enrollment	Enrolled	Target Completed	Completed
Recruitment, Training, and Employment						
ManageFirst - (2 cohorts) (Incumbents)	4/11/16	12/30/16	40	46	40	43
Other Objectives						
Total Participants that earn a credential-- Other					40	38
Total Participants that earn a credential-- ManageFirst Professional Credential					35	5
Total Participants promoted due to training					TBD	Ongoing
Total Participants receiving an increased wage due to training					TBD	Ongoing

VIII. Sustainability

RIHA/RIHEF has extensive relationships with state and local agencies, and they believe these relationships will be critical in garnering funding for the RIFMTP once funding from RJRI has elapsed. RIHEF has in the past received grants from the American Express Foundation, the Governor's Workforce Board, the Industry Skills Development Initiative, the National Emergency Grant, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, the On-Ramps Career Pathways Grant, the Rhode Island Commodores, and the Rhode Island Foundation. Industry partner funding from RI DLT has also been particularly beneficial in enabling the partnership to afford salaries, keep the lights on, and have the various supplies it might need to successfully implement the program, so without that funding, the sustainability of this partnership may be questionable.

IX. Lessons Learned

The following lessons were learned by the RIFMTP in implementing its training program:

- Companies and businesses, particularly those that operate on slim margins, are small, and are in their first years of business, may be unable to participate in a program that requires workers to be off the floor during work hours. These employers may not be able to afford the costs associated with paying for the training, paying the employee during the training, and paying another employee who is covering the trainee's shifts.
- When cost-sharing is involved to pay for training costs, ensure employers can afford the amount suggested, or identify a tiered system based on business size or yearly income. One possibility would be to develop scholarships for new and small businesses.

X. Best Practices

The following best practices were utilized by the RIFMTP in implementing its training program:

- Create a culture of community within the industry to help cultivate new partnerships between all involved. This can lead to innovative projects and initiatives between even the most unlikely partners.
- Include employer partners as much as possible in training development and execution and allow training programs to change rapidly based on employer needs and constraints.
- Tailor curriculum offerings based on each employer's business and staffing needs.
- Be open to partners outside the traditional sector participating in trainings.

XI. Recommendations

Based on the implementation successes and challenges for the RIFMTP, the following recommendations for RJRI are suggested:

- Provide support to partnerships that have difficulties getting Social Security numbers or other identifying information from trainees. These partnerships need to be reimbursed for everyone who receives training, so if this is the reason why RJRI will not reimburse

trainees, RJRI should provide support when enrolling participants. This is to ensure that trainees understand the importance of providing this information or understand how their information will and will not be used, so that they feel safe in providing this information.

- Continue to enable RJRI grantees to adapt their training to meet employer needs. This approach ensured that the RIFMTP could be successful even when encountering major recruitment challenges.
- Send a RJRI representative to do the intake or offer intake online so that the trainees are working with a government entity to provide their social security numbers instead of a business.