THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

REAL JOBS RHODE ISLAND:
Main Report

Prepared for:

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Section 1: Introduction

The Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program is a sector workforce development program initiated in 2015 by the State of Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT). The DLT developed RJRI to support the creation of industry-led sector partnerships in order to implement workforce training programs that would enhance and increase the skills of Rhode Island's workforce, increase the ability of sectors to grow, and advance the state's overall economy. RJRI was designed specifically to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of the state's support for workforce development initiatives that industries need in order to prosper, and provides funding for training new workers, upskilling incumbent workers, creating pipelines of potential workers and students, and supporting the growth of industry workforce intermediaries in the state's expanding economic sectors.

Central to the functionality of RJRI are industry-led partnerships. Made up of industry employers, educational institutions, workforce intermediaries, community-based organizations, and training partners, partnerships create workforce solutions that are intended to directly address the unique issues facing their industry. Through RJRI, the DLT funds these partnerships to enable them to carry out sector development, workforce training programs and related services. This industry-led strategy allows RJRI to be flexible, responsive, and focused on the needs of Rhode Island's growing economic sectors.

Goals

Sector-based strategies are based on relationships between state policy makers, workforce intermediaries, private employers, community organizations, and educational institutions that unite behind the goal of improving and expanding the workforce of a particular economic sector. These organizations form a sector partnership that can provide training and other developmental programs. Often referred to as "demand side workforce development", sector strategies start with economic sector needs and enlist employers to develop training modules for skills that are lacking but essential for their industry to grow and stay competitive. Sector strategies aim to develop a strong talent pool for a specific industry, and well-designed sector strategies target specific subgroups of workers who are prepared for additional industry-specific training in order to build the talent pool. This differs from "supply side" workforce development, which focuses on un- or underemployed individuals from a specific community or demographic group, identifies their needs and barriers to employment, and conducts programs to address those needs and barriers. Supply side programs often are noted for their strength in providing support services and helping their clients develop basic competencies and increased employability, and therefore getting people into jobs quickly. However, supply side programs frequently are challenged and criticized because the jobs they train for may not always exist, especially as the economy becomes more technically advanced, and, more importantly, the jobs often provide subsistence pay, have little to no potential for growth and do not provide long-term stability or opportunities for career advancement.[1] The most successful state-sponsored economic strategies employ elements of both supply and demand side training approaches. As is the case with RJRI, these programs seek to place workers in career-oriented positions that industry needs while also

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[1] Social Solutions. *Place Based vs. Sector-based Workforce Development.*
http://www.socialsolutions.com/blog/place-based-vs-sector-based-workforce-development/

supporting the specific needs of workers with significant barriers to employment. In the end, if these programs are designed well, they can both reduce barriers to well-paid career positions for communities that historically have been excluded and provide the workers that employers need to grow.

Through their focus on reducing barriers and training workers in critical industry skills, sector-based strategies directly address the closure of the growing skills gap. The current workforce in the U.S. largely lacks the skills and qualifications needed for jobs in the fastest-growing industries, leading to what some scholars have referred to as "job polarization."[2] While the economy has largely recovered since the Great Recession, it has done so by increasing its demand for high-skilled (and, as a result, high-wage) workers and low-skilled/low-wage, mainly service, workers, but opportunities for middle-skilled/middle-wage jobs have declined.[3] Although Rhode Island was among the states experiencing the most job loss, both nationally and regionally,[4] its economic recovery has seen a shift in which employers are filling more high-demand, high-wage jobs with out-of-state workers, a trend driven by the growth of jobs that require a college education.[5]

Nationally, the gap between workers' skills and employers may lead to up to 7.7 million unfilled jobs by 2020—the vast majority of which require either a college degree or a postsecondary certificate.[6] To close this gap, sector-based partnerships focus on training new workers for low- and middle-skilled positions and upskilling incumbent workers to enable them to advance within the industry. When done in tandem, sector partnerships can create career pipelines that both help sectors fill middle- and high-skilled jobs with workers with experience in the sector and clear bottlenecks from the career pipeline—helping low-wage workers increase their earnings, helping industry decrease expenditures on training and retaining workers, and allowing companies to expand because they have a qualified workforce ready to fill new positions.

Sector-based partnerships focus on middle- and highly-skilled positions because they form the bulk of unfilled positions within the economy. Middle-skilled positions reflect jobs that require more education than a high-school diploma, but not as much as a postsecondary degree or certificate.[7] Highly-skilled positions usually are those that require both a postsecondary degree and additional employment-related training.

Middle skilled positions are particularly difficult to fill since many existing un- and underemployed potential workers possess only a high school degree or equivalent. Training for middle-skill positions often targets populations without a postsecondary degree and the un- and underemployed, especially members of underserved populations such as people with criminal

[2] Canon, Maria, and Elise Marifian. "Job polarization leaves middle-skilled workers out in the cold." *The Regional Economist* Jan (2013). https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/january-2013/job-polarization -leaves-middleskilled-workers-out-in-the-cold

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Burke, Mary A. "Rhode Island in the Great Recession: factors contributing to its sharp downturn and slow recovery." *Current Policy Perspectives Paper* 14-09 (2014).

[5] Burke, Mary A. The Rhode Island labor market in recovery: where is the skills gap? *Current Policy Perspectives.* (2015). https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/current-policy-perspectives/2015/the-rhode-island-labor-market-in-recovery-where-is-the-skills-gap.aspx

[6] A. Carnevale. *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University, June 15, 2010.1.

[7] A. Carnevale, N. Smith, J. R. Stone, P. Kotamraju, B. Steuernagel, and K. A. Green, Career Clusters: *Forecasting Demand for High School Through College Jobs*, Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University, November 2012. 10.

histories, minorities, and those lacking basic skills such as literacy or language.[8] Training for middle-skilled positions allows those workers to attain the specific skills and certifications required by a particular industry and secure stable and often well-paid jobs within the industry without the investment in postsecondary education. A 2009 study of middle-skill career pathways found that training programs targeted at preparing new workers for middle-skill positions resulted in an average 18 percent increase in earnings for participants compared with untrained peers.[9]

Further, many industries require both a college degree and specific technical skills, and highly value the possession of technical skills in potential workers.[10] This fact is often a challenge for recent college graduates who possess the credential to get a job in a growing industry but can't get a job without experience or specific knowledge that can be gained only on the job. Such workers can benefit directly from the industry-specific training provided through sector-based strategies.

Sector-based partnerships also focus on upskilling incumbent workers, particularly workers who lack the additional skills or credentials to move up in their industry.[11] This creates challenges for businesses, which struggle to hire internally to fill upper-level positions as their workforce ages and retires.[12] By training incumbent workers to gain the skills and certifications needed for advancement, sector-based partnerships allow businesses to hire existing industry employees for upper-level industry jobs and break up a dam of experienced but under-skilled middle- and entry-level employees who are preventing new workers from entering the industry. Many industries today face an aging workforce of upper and mid-level management and do not have clear strategies for training current employees to replace these retirees.[13] Further, many industries have not identified effective means of utilizing employees near retirement to train new or middle-level employees, nor do they provide options for phased retirement, which could have benefits related to worker retention, transfer of knowledge across generations, retirement transitions, and workforce planning.[14] In addition, some industries cannot expand due to a lack of experienced upper-level talent available for employment. Incumbent worker training programs are designed with just this purpose in mind.

Together, this dual focus of sector-based strategies on training new workers for middle-skilled positions and upskilling incumbent workers allows sector-based partnerships to improve the overall health and efficiency of the industry. Utilizing this strategy is thought to help industries fill existing positions with workers trained with the specific skills and knowledge needed by the sector and create direct and open pathways for advancement within the industry. Further, this strategy helps industry companies lower the training costs associated with hiring

[8] S. Spaulding, A. Martin-Caughey, *The Goals and Dimensions of Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs*, Urban Institute, December 2015.

[9] S. Maguire, J. Freely, C. Clymer, M. Conway, and D. Schwartz, *Tuning in to Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Study*, Public/Private Ventures, July 2010.

[10] Bentley University, Bentley University's PreparedU Project on Millennial Preparedness. January 29, 2014. https://www.slideshare.net/BentleyU/prepared-u-project-on-millennial-preparedness

[11] Taylor, Colin, *Employer Engagement in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*. 2011. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] Caldo, Thomas J., "Talent Management in the Era of the Aging Workforce: The Critical Role of Knowledge Transfer." *Public Personnel Management*. Winter 2008, 37:4, pp. 403-416.

[14] Jeszeck, C., Collins, M., Hoffrey, L., Beedon, L., & Rider, J. "Older workers: Phased retirement programs, although uncommon, provide flexibility for workers and employers." June 2017. .http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3063441

new employees. This strategy has shown some success in other states. For example, in Pennsylvania, 84 percent of employers who participated in sector-based industry partnerships in 2009 experienced significant increases in their overall productivity.[15] Similarly, in Massachusetts, employers reported reduced turnover rates, improved job performance, and fewer customer complaints after participation in sector-based partnerships.[16]

The success of sector-based workforce development relies heavily on the sector partnerships. Coordinated work between training providers and industry representatives allows for the design and implementation of training programs that directly serve the needs of the industry while also providing trainees with valuable skills. To facilitate this relationship, sector partnerships frequently rely on workforce intermediaries, groups that serve the needs of both industry employers and industry employees.[17] Workforce intermediaries act as a valuable middleman in sector partnerships, as they can communicate between industry companies, recruiting agencies, and training providers to coordinate clear and effective training programs. Workforce intermediaries are especially valuable because they can overcome inherent competition between companies in a sector due to their status, and as a result can help mediate the relationship between individual companies, or between the industry and organizations outside the industry.

Sector-based strategies and sector-based partnerships can be an effective method for improving individual industries and the state's economy. To have the greatest impact, however, these strategies rely on the following best practices:

- Effective sector-based strategies are funded by the state to increase stability but establish stable and long-term relationships in the form of sector partnerships to ensure that training can continue, potentially without direct funding.
- To help encourage stability, effective strategies plan for sustainability and work to cement strong relationships within the partnership. The inclusion of a workforce intermediary helps in many cases to ensure the strength of the relationships between each member of the partnership. These partnerships work to create a defined curriculum that trains a distinct target population that would both benefit most directly from training and be beneficial to the industry.
- Effective strategies focus on training both new workers and incumbent workers to avoid stagnation within an industry.
- Effective sector-based strategies focus on serving industries that need the help of workforce training programs due to projected future growth or current stagnation.

RJRI is fundamentally a sector-based workforce development strategy and directly reflects these best practices in its goals and practice. Its design features include:

- Industry-based strategies that address skills gaps and personnel shortages.
- Building career pathways and increasing the number of available jobs. This is accomplished through the training of new workers and the upskilling of incumbent workers to increase upward mobility within the industry.

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[15] Industry Partnerships in Pennsylvania, booklet, *Pennsylvania Workforce Development*, April 2009. http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=575072&mode=2.
[16] L. Woolsey, G. Groves, *State Sector Strategies: Coming of Age*, National Governors Association. 2013. 2.
[17] *Ibid*.

- Connecting private industry, education providers, community organizations, and workforce intermediaries to enhance the state's overall economy. This goal focuses on the creation of sector-based partnerships that can successfully execute sector-based strategies.

RJRI was developed initially in 2015 and began with a request for proposals (RFP) for planning grants of up to $25,000 to facilitate sectors coming together, analyze sector needs, identify training components that would benefit the industry, and design programming to meet identified needs.[18] The agency then issued an RFP for implementation grants to fund training and sector development utilizing a cooperative agreement structure. The DLT awarded 26 sector partnership proposals in 11 industries in four regions of the state.[19] While most of the successful implementation grants had also received planning grants, several partnerships were funded that did not participate in a planning grant.

RJRI focused on sectors identified by the Brookings Institution as either "advanced growth areas" or "opportunity industries."[20] These industries were identified by Brookings as investing heavily in research and development and STEM workers, prioritizing innovation, and demonstrating high productivity, strong exports, and higher pay. According to Brookings, these advanced industries "…encompass the nation's highest-value economic activity…[and]…are the country's best shot at innovative, inclusive, and sustainable growth."[21] Rhode Island's advanced industry growth areas included: biomedical innovation; IT/Software, Cyber-Physical Systems, and Data Analytics; Defense Shipbuilding and Maritime; Advanced Business Services; and Design, Food, and Custom Manufacturing. Opportunity industries that Brookings determined to offer "good jobs with livable wages for individuals with varying levels of educational attainment" included Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics; and Arts, Education, Hospitality, and Tourism.[22] In addition, the DLT decided to add the healthcare industry to this list because it employs the most workers of any industry in the state.

[18] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training: *2015 Real Jobs RI 2015 Planning Grant Awardees.* http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/PlanGrantRecipients.pdf
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State.* Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. (January 2016)
[21] Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State.* Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. (January 2016), 6
[22] *Ibid*., 7

Table 1.1: Industries for Growth and Opportunity by the Brookings Institute and the DLT

Advanced Industry Growth Areas[23]	
Biomedical Innovation	31,548 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: biopharmaceuticals, medical devices, digital health
IT/ Software, Cyber-Physical Systems, and Data Analytics	12,538 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: data sciences, cyber-physical systems
Shipbuilding and Maritime	19,107 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: submarine & boat building, ocean sciences, marine/coastal tourism
Advanced Business Services	34,780 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: back office operations
Design, Materials, Food, and Custom Manufacturing	11,045 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: product design, food processing
Opportunity Industry Growth Areas[24]	
Arts, Education, Hospitality, and Tourism	42,801 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: marine/coastal tourism, colleges & universities
Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics	21,322 jobs in 2013 - Priority areas: grocery wholesale, warehousing & storage
Additional Industries Added By DLT[25]	
Hospitals and Health Care	27,279 jobs in 2013[26] - Priority areas: certified nursing assistants, nursing professionals, community health, behavioral health, physical therapy, & medical technology[27]

[23] *Ibid*., 6-8

[24] *Ibid*., 6-8

[25] Hospitals and Healthcare were added by DLT due to the size of the industry in Rhode Island

[26] Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State.* Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. (January 2016), 39.

[27] The priority areas listed here are made up of the areas focused on by partnerships, since the Brookings report did not include Healthcare as a priority industry.

Overview of 2016 Programming

RJRI aimed to be an industry-led program that utilized educational institutions, community-based organizations, training organizations, government partners, and workforce intermediaries to provide sustainable and innovative workforce development programming for different populations of workers, and the 2016 Implementation of RJRI met these goals. This is evident from the composition of the partnerships that participated in the 2016 implementation period. Industry employers clearly informed the development of programming through their widespread participation in 2016 partnerships. While a majority of the organizations that participated in RJRI in 2016 worked with only one partnership, a substantial number were involved in multiple partnerships, facilitating the spread of connections and knowledge throughout many RJRI partnerships. Educational institutions were particularly well represented in 2016 partnerships, and were largely involved in multiple partnerships that served different state industries. These diverse and industry-led partnerships benefited a substantial number of Rhode Island industries and populations. In doing so, the 2016 implementation of RJRI provided training and workforce development to the critical industries and populations identified in the Brookings Institution's 2016 report.

Overview of 2016 Programming

26 Partnerships & 335 Individual Partners

186 Employers

46 Community-Based Organizations

31 Training Organizations

28 Workforce Intermediaries

26 Educational Institutions

16 Government Agencies

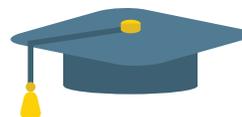274 Partners involved in... **1** Partnership

42 Partners involved in... **2** Partnerships

9 Partners involved in... **3** Partnerships

4 Partners involved in... **4** Partnerships

Higher Education Involvement

CCRI: 10 Partnerships

NEIT & URI: 8 Partnerships

RIC, Brown, RWU: 4 Partnerships

Bryant, MTTI, JWU : 2 Partnerships

RISD: 1 Partnership

Career & Technical High Schools: 13 Partnerships

Partnerships by Industry

4 Construction	4 Regional	3 Healthcare	3 Manufacturing	2 Bioscience	2 Finance & Insurance
2 Defense	2 Information Technology	1 Design	1 Hospitality	1 Aquaculture	1 Marine Trades
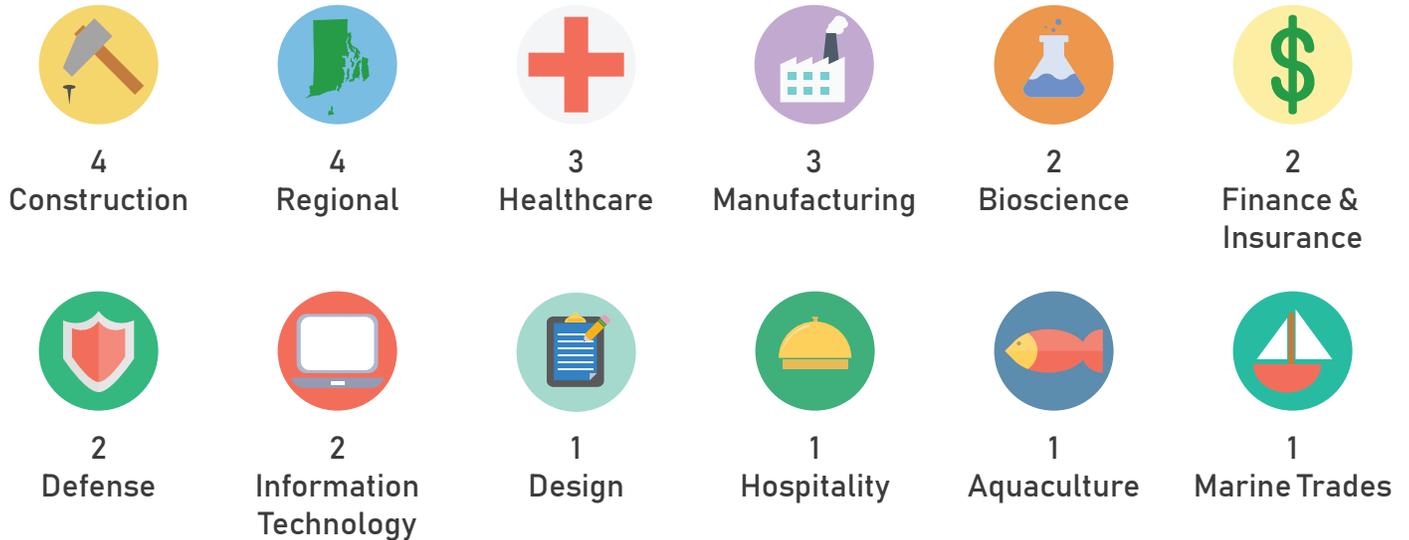
Partnership's Target Population

14 Un & Underemployed	9 College Educated	6 Youth
10 New Worker Programs	5 Incumbent Worker Programs	10 New & Incumbent Programs
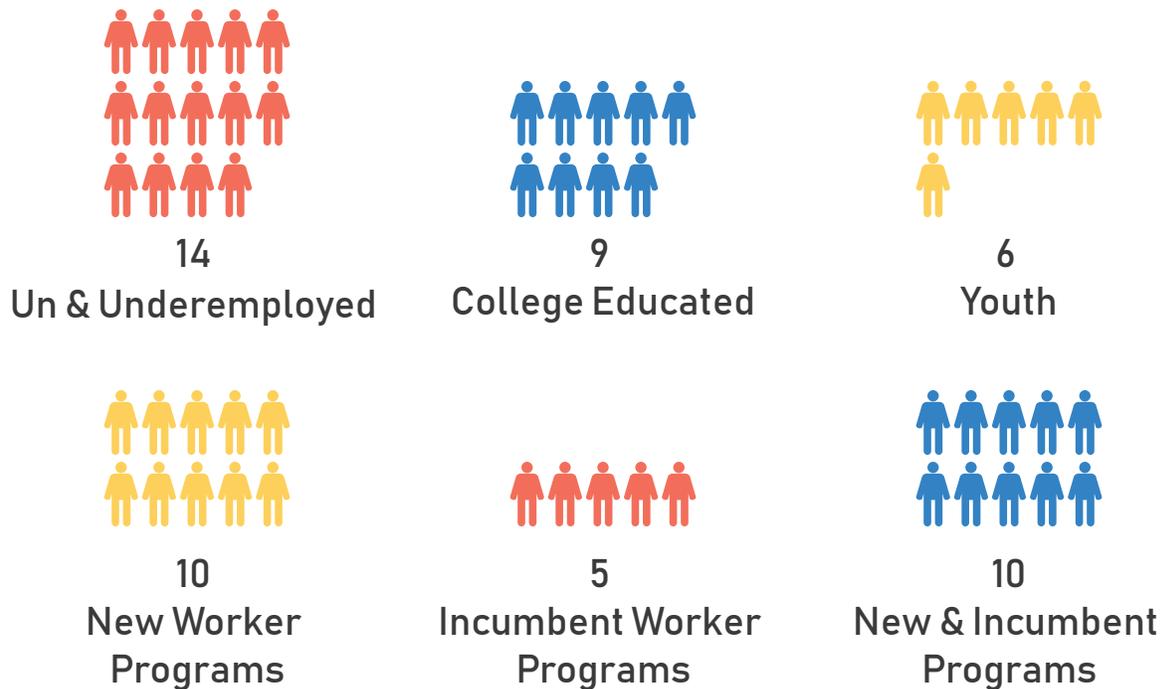
Workforce Needs Addressed

26 Workforce Challenges	25 Industry & Economy Challenges	9 Training Challenges

University of Rhode Island

In 2015, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training contracted the University of Rhode Island (URI) to conduct an analysis of the RJRI program. The University of Rhode Island team was tasked with creating an institutional history of the RJRI program's implementation, conducting case studies on each of the 26 implementation grants awarded in the 2016 RJRI implementation period, and conducting an overall evaluation of the RJRI implementation in 2016 to identify the best practices and common challenges in implementing a sector workforce development program.

Researchers from URI conducted interviews with partnership lead grantees and staff at the DLT and analyzed program documents. URI sought to better understand how the sector partnerships and related programs were implemented and to identify the challenges, successes, best practices, and lessons learned during implementation of the grant.

This report represents the completion of URI's analysis of the RJRI 2016 programming. The institutional history includes the history and development of RJRI and follows its implementation process from its origins to the completion of the 2017 implementation period.

The case study portion of the analysis consists of 26 case studies, one for each of the partnerships that received implementation grants in 2016. These case studies examine the formation of each partnership, the needs of the industry each partnership planned to serve, what each partnership implemented to serve those needs, and an assessment of the challenges, achievements, and outcomes of this implementation process. Each case study also includes best practices employed by the specific partnership, lessons learned from implementation, and recommendations for the future.

The analysis identifies and examines themes in the overall challenges, achievements, and best practices of all 26 partnerships, as well as presenting recommendations for future iterations of the RJRI program for consideration by the DLT based on the experience of grantees for the 2016 programming. More information on the methods used to conduct the analysis can be found in the methodology section at the end of the report.

Partnership Descriptions

Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership
The Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership (RJRICP) was created to address the state's growing demand for trained cybersecurity workers. It formed under the direction of the Southeastern New England Defense Industry Alliance (SENEDIA) and incorporated a diverse group of universities, defense companies, and technology and cybersecurity training companies. The goals of the RJRICP were to increase awareness about the defense industry's cybersecurity needs and opportunities to the public, recruit potential workers to the cybersecurity industry, and help small businesses in the cybersecurity industry bring new ideas to market. To achieve its goals, the RJRICP offered a Cybersecurity Awareness Training, a Core Competency Assessment for jobs in the cybersecurity industry, a Cybersecurity Certification Training, a Cybersecurity Internship Program, and a Cybersecurity Ideas and Product to Market Council. These programs targeted under- or unemployed individuals, students, and veterans.

Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program
The Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program led by the Claflin Medical Equipment Company was formed to address a shortage of experienced applicants for technician positions in the biomedical and health field. The apprenticeship program collaborated with eight companies from the healthcare and biomedical industries as well as local community colleges. The partnership also made use of the facilities and services of local hospitals and nonprofits for training purposes. The goals of this partnership specifically included: developing training and apprenticeship programs for Biomedical Equipment Technicians and Data Scientists; working with the Community College of Rhode Island to achieve accreditation and certification of the programs participants; collaborating with local healthcare providers to provide hands-on training experiences for program participants; and producing qualified and skilled workers who would be able to handle the unique challenges of this industry.

Residential Construction Partnership
The Residential Construction Partnership (RCP) was created to increase the talent pool for members of the construction industry and to restore the industry's aging workforce. It formed under the direction of the Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA) and included a broad number of stakeholders, including local Career and Technical (CTE) schools, construction industry associations, and training providers. The goals of the RCP were to promote and create training opportunities for young people in the residential construction industry, and to increase recruitment into the residential construction industry. To achieve these goals, the RCP created an industry jobs bank, increased recruitment and engagement with CTE schools, and assisted with the placement of students and job seekers into internships and jobs. The RCP's services primarily targeted students and current employees in the residential construction industry.

Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program
The Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program (RIUAP) was formed to address the longstanding underrepresentation of women and minorities in the plumbing and pipefitting industry and in anticipation of replacing the currently aging and retiring workforce. The RIUAP was formed by the Local 51 Plumbers and Pipefitters union and the Mayforth Group, who partnered with non-profit community organizations to provide support services to training participants. The goals of the RIUAP were to produce a talent pipeline to meet the immediate employment needs of the industry by preparing training participants for an already existing industry apprenticeship program. To achieve this goal, the RIUAP offered pre-apprenticeship training to a target population that consisted of people of color and under- or unemployed individuals in urban cities.

RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative
The RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative (RIMGC) was designed to increase the employability of under- or unemployed populations and prepare them for careers in the manufacturing industry to replace the currently aging and retiring workforce. The RIMGC was formed through collaboration between the RI Research Foundation/Polaris Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and the Rhode Island Manufacturing Association (RIMA), who partnered with a broad group of colleges and universities, manufacturing companies, and training providers. The goal of the RIMGC was to develop basic skills, job training, and an assessment center that provided employers in the manufacturing industry with pre-screened and pre-trained

employees who were identified for their commitment to long-term success and employment in the industry. To achieve this goal, RIMGC offered a manufacturing "bootcamp" training program targeted at under- or unemployed individuals and low income populations, as well as populations that traditionally encounter barriers to employment.

Marine Trades and Composites Partnership
The Marine Trades and Composites Partnership (MTCP) was designed to attract and retain skilled workers in the marine trades and composites industry through training programs for both potential and incumbent employees. It formed under the direction of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA) and incorporated numerous companies from across the marine trades industry, including training institutes, manufacturers, non-profit companies, marinas, and boatyards. The goals of the MTCP were to establish training opportunities that prepare workers for current jobs in the marine trades and composites industry and to expand outreach to increase recruitment into the marine trades and composites industry. To achieve these goals, the MTCP offered a carpentry apprenticeship training program, a marine and composites pre-apprenticeship training program, a launch training program, and an incumbent worker training program, as well as programming aimed at vocational high schools, sailing programs and public high schools.

Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island
The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island (LDPRI) formed to improve the leadership and soft skills of new managers and supervisors in the manufacturing industry. LDPRI was formed by Toray Plastics and numerous manufacturing companies, manufacturing industry associations, and colleges and universities. The goals of the LDPRI were to create a comprehensive, competency-based leadership training program to train incoming or inexperienced employee leaders, and recruit and train senior leaders to act as industry mentors for new leaders. To achieve these goals, the LDPRI offered a leadership training program and a mentor training program to employees in the manufacturing industry.

Healthy Jobs RI Partnership
The Healthy Jobs RI Partnership, led by Rhode Island College, was formed to address several issues within the healthcare sector. These issues included: difficulty training and retaining paraprofessional healthcare workers, a lack of training in behavioral healthcare, and the changing workforce and healthcare needs of local populations. The Healthy Jobs RI Partnership formed committees to facilitate the advancement of their goals. Their goals consisted of developing a behavioral health training for incumbent healthcare paraprofessionals and unemployed trainees, a community health worker training, and a peer mentoring program to support new hires. The partnership's committee members included local NGOs, Central Falls School District, and several industry groups.

Man Up 2 Careers Partnership
The Man Up 2 Careers Partnership (MU2CP), led by Man Up Inc., was formed to address the lack of opportunities and skills in target populations. Target populations included low income incarcerated men and women of color. MU2CP worked to prepare this population for careers in the manufacturing and marine trades industries. The target population faces many barriers to employment in addition to their criminal record including lack of skills, experience, and credentials. Because of these unique challenges, it was essential for MU2CP to work closely with

local industry trade associations, training and educational partners, and support service providers to meet their goals. Their goals consisted of providing participants with case management and support services and implementing and executing a multifaceted workforce training plan in order to provide the target population with the skills and credentials necessary to attain high wages, diverse and viable employment options, and further educational opportunities.

Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership
The Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership (PMCSBP) was formed to recruit and train new workers for the shipbuilding industry to meet its increased demand for labor. The partnership was led by Electric Boat and consisted of institutions of higher education, high school career and technical education (CTE) programs, and a variety of industry employers. The goals of the PMCSBP were to expand CTE programs to build a pipeline into careers in the shipbuilding industry, and offer training programs that trained workers in high-demand industry skills. To fulfill these goals, the PMCSBP worked with the Rhode Island Department of Education to expand training opportunities at CTE schools so that Rhode Island's youth were introduced to the opportunities relating to shipbuilding and the manufacturing trades. It also offered training modules in maritime welding, machining, maritime shipfitting, maritime pipefitting, maritime electrical, robotic welding, and maritime sheet metal, as well as CTE Maritime Training and shipbuilding internships. These programs targeted students, the under- or unemployed, veterans, and skilled workers.

Healthcare Training Collaborative
The Health Care Training Collaborative (HCTC) was formed to address issues with recruitment and retention of certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and other specialized healthcare professionals in the eldercare industry. The eldercare industry is a fast-growing sector in the state of Rhode Island. The pace of growth has made it increasingly difficult to fill needed positions with qualified, skilled workers. The HCTC was composed of several non-profits, educational institutions, and senior living centers, with the primary grantee being St. Antoine Residence. The goals of HCTC specifically were to: recruit, train, and support un- and underemployed individuals as CNA's; increase the skill set of incumbent CNA's through training; and recruit and train nurse practitioner and physical therapy students in geriatric health care service delivery.

Medtech Innovation Engine
The MedTech Innovation Engine (MTIE) was created to develop a sustainable curriculum for medical technology (medtech) entrepreneurs. It also planned to foster collaboration between entrepreneurs and various healthcare related sectors with an ultimate goal of developing an innovation pipeline. The medtech industry is a fast-growing industry and a key driver of job creation, and Rhode Island's medtech sector is deficient in resources, capacity, and infrastructure compared to its neighboring states. MTIE aimed to address and develop solutions for these deficiencies. MTIE consisted of collaborators from medtech companies, hospitals, governmental partners, and universities. With most training programs provided by Social Enterprise Greenhouse (SEG), MTIE aimed to provide several services to medtech entrepreneurs including early-stage feasibility checks, workshops, an accelerator program and late-stage huddles. SEG also provided meeting space for entrepreneurs.

RI Food Management Training Partnership
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). This partnership sought to address a deficit of skilled workers to fill management and supervisory level positions in the food industry. This partnership included the membership of many local restaurants and hotels as well as The Community College of Rhode Island. The primary goal of this partnership was to provide professional development, training, resources, and knowledge for career advancement to mid-level incumbent workers. The RIFMPT met its goal by providing in-person and online incumbent worker training on training topics as requested by employers that would benefit their businesses and employees.

Insurance Innovation Partnership
The Insurance Innovation Partnership (IIP) was created to address a number of issues within Rhode Island's Insurance Industry. These issues included an aging workforce, lack of new talent and licensed insurance professionals, and an absence of training, education, and career pathways in the industry. The lead applicant in this partnership was the Independent Insurance Agents of Rhode Island. This partnership included several local insurance companies as well as inVest, which provided training materials and curricula. The goal of this partnership was to execute trainings for both potential and incumbent employees. It aimed to create pathways into the industry for new employees as well as to assist incumbent employees with retaining or advancing their careers. IIP directed their recruitment of potential employees towards unemployed general office employees, veterans, and high school/college graduates.

RI Financial Skills Initiative
The Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative (RIFSI) was created to develop and implement solutions to several issues within the banking industry of the financial and insurance sectors. Rhode Island's finance and insurance industry are outpacing the rest of the economy in terms of growth. The current workforce is aging and the industry lacks sufficiently trained replacements, including credit-trained personnel with commercial lending knowledge. The lead applicant in this partnership was the Rhode Island Bankers Association. This partnership's members included many local banks as well as the Community College and University of Rhode Island. The goals of RIFSI included implementing trainings on the fundamentals of banking and commercial lending, and these trainings were aimed at incumbent workers.

Aquaculture Training Partnership
The Aquaculture Training Partnership (ATP) was formed to train new workers to acquire the skills necessary to be successful employees in the aquaculture industry. The ATP was formed by The Education Exchange, and included numerous aquaculture industry partners, non-profit recruiting partners, and institutes of higher education. The ATP's goals were to design a training program that filled industry skills gaps and provided career pathways to new entry-level workers. To fulfill these goals, the ATP offered a rigorous training program that included training and on-site internships. This training program targeted under- or unemployed workers, and those with experience working outdoors, with a special focus on fishermen, farmers, contractors, veterans, Narragansett Indians, and recent high school graduates in Washington County.

Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership
The Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership (CTSUP) was formed to help small contractors grow and compete in Rhode Island's thriving construction industry. Led by the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation, the partnership included educational partners, construction companies, city governments, and other industry employers. The CTSUP sought to eliminate the barriers to business expansion facing small contractors, as well as helping to meet their business and professional development needs. To achieve these goals, the CTSUP offered a training program that developed the skills necessary to manage a successful construction business. The CTSUP also developed a Contract Support Center to provide administrative support to small construction businesses and graduates of the training program. These programs primarily targeted the owners and employees of small contracting businesses working in the Rhode Island construction industry.

Building Futures Partnership
The Building Futures Partnership (BFP) formed to provide safety and skills training to construction workers to prepare them for employment on large-scale energy infrastructure projects in Rhode Island. The BFP was formed by Building Futures, a non-profit that has offered training programs and pre-apprenticeship training in Rhode Island since 2007, along with local unions, training providers, and construction industry companies. The goals of the BFP were to offer safety and skills trainings to current members of Building Future's pre- apprenticeship program and to incumbent workers in the building trades, and to enable them to work on large scale energy projects as employees or apprentices. In 2016, the BFP hoped its program graduates would contribute to the construction of Deepwater's Block Island Wind Farm. To achieve these goals, the BFP offered a maritime safety training, a safe rigging practices training, and a scaffold safety training.

Real Jobs IT Partnership
The Real Jobs IT Partnership (RJITP) was initially formed to address skills gaps and to build a more comprehensive pipeline of education and training programs in the Information Technology (IT) sector. During the RJRI Implementation process, however, the RJITP's goals were modified to focus instead on stabilizing and increasing the organizational capacity of the RJITP's lead applicant, the Tech Collective. This shift in focus allowed the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) to work with Tech Collective to develop a strategic plan for the organization, revitalize the organization's board of directors, restructure and stabilize the organization's finances, and establish the organization as the fiscal agent for a P-Tech employer liaison.

CNA Talent Network Partnership
The CNA Talent Network Partnership (CNA TNP) sought to address a number of problems within the healthcare sector. Certified nursing assistants (CNAs) are currently the fastest growing occupation in Rhode Island, and employers have noted that many CNAs lack essential skills needed for success in this industry. CNA TNP sought to address this skill gap. The CNA TNP partnership was composed of the lead applicant Stepping Up, The Community College of Rhode Island, local community organizations, and industry partners. CNA TNP sought to specifically provide training, education, career coaching, and support services for low skill under- or unemployed job seekers and workers, so they may work as CNAs for healthcare and long-term

care organizations. This partnership targeted recruitment towards individuals who were under- or unemployed and those with low incomes.

Phoenix Partnership
The Phoenix Partnership was designed to address the core issues currently facing Rhode Island manufacturers by developing and implementing a training program focused on training employees in Lean Manufacturing practices. The manufacturing industry has a potential for strong growth in the U.S but currently has difficulty recruiting and identifying qualified workers with the necessary skills for success. The Phoenix Partnership, led by Hyman Brickle & Son, Inc., worked with industry groups, educational partners, and local manufacturers to design and implement tailored training programs. The Partnership endeavored to create a training that addressed three levels of skill sets, gaps in manufacturing knowledge, and employee competencies. The trainings targeted both newly hired and incumbent workers and was designed to decrease turnover and increase productivity in the manufacturing sector within Rhode Island.

Partnership for Real IT Jobs
The Partnership for Real IT Jobs (PRITJ) was formed to support the growth of tech talent in Rhode Island. Organized by LaunchCode, the partnership included non-profits that aided in recruitment efforts and numerous companies that served as apprenticeship training sites. The goal of the PRITJ was to create a support system to introduce new tech talent to employers in Rhode Island. To achieve this goal, the PRITJ delivered an online tech skills assessment, executed a CS50x coding bootcamp, and facilitated a tech apprenticeship program where participants were matched with apprenticeships in companies seeking information technology workers. The RITJ also engaged in substantial recruitment efforts to build a pipeline of candidates for this apprenticeship program. This program targeted students from local colleges and universities, veterans, and under- and unemployed workers.

The Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women
The Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women (The Hire Path) led and implemented by the Opportunities Industrialization Center of Rhode Island (OIC) was created to provide workforce readiness training for underserved populations, specifically people of color and women. The program was tailored towards careers in the marine trades, construction, and green industries. The HirePath implemented a workforce readiness training program to assess and develop basic workforce skills. Some of the topics covered included interview skills, workplace etiquette, and critical thinking. The HirePath was composed of a partnership between local businesses, community organizations, and local technical and vocational education providers. The HirePath focused their trainings on trades that would lead to long-term employment in careers that pay a living wage. The broad goal of this partnership was to create systems change that generates pathways for minorities and women to become employed in sectors where these populations are less represented.

Design Forward Partnership
The Design Forward Partnership (DFP) formed to strengthen and support the design sector by increasing exposure to the industry, while helping professionals gain necessary business skills and develop their careers. Led by DESIGNxRI, the partnership consisted of companies seeking design employees, institutes of higher education, and training partners. The goals of the DFP

were to cultivate a pipeline of high school-aged students by educating them about the potential of turning creative skills into future high-paying jobs, retaining Rhode Island's young talent by informing local students of professional work opportunities, growing the professional skills of post-graduates, and supporting designers already in their careers to meet the ever-changing needs of the sector. To achieve these goals, the DFP offered an Advance Design Talent training program, a Post-Graduate Design Fellowship, and a Career Exploration Program. These programs targeted incumbent workers in the design industry, current students and recent design graduates from the state's institutions of higher education, and high school students.

Westerly Regional Jobs Partnership
The Westerly Regional Jobs Partnership (WRRJP), led by The Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce, was designed to address the insufficient capacity in the Westerly region to meet current and projected workforce needs. For example, the Westerly area has a high rate (7.5 percent in 2015) of unemployment compared to surrounding areas. The WRRJP partnered with many Westerly area businesses, non-profit organizations, local schools, and an adult learning center. This was an employer-led approach that aimed at implementing a six-week Work Readiness and Digital Literacy training program for un- and under-employed, low skilled individuals. The second goal was to execute two, week-long Biz Camp programs designed for high school students. The partnership provided case management services, on-site visits to potential employers, and internship opportunities to increase employability among its trainees.

RJ Partnership of Northern RI
The Real Jobs Partnership of Northern RI (NRI Partnership), initiated by the main applicant Connecting for Children and Families in Woonsocket, was created to provide competency-based training that met the goals, skills shortages and gaps, and real-time job opportunities for banking, insurance, call centers, and bookkeeping/accounting jobs within the finance and insurance sectors. The focus of this partnership was dictated by DLT data on 2022 Occupational Projections showing that these industries have many job openings but that employers have a difficult time finding professional and skilled workers to fill positions. The NRI Partnership included members from local banks, educational institutions, and industry organizations. The main goal of this partnership was to provide competency-based trainings that supported unemployed and underemployed individuals in gaining skills and job opportunities.

# Section 3: Addressing Sector Need and Innovation

A central aspect of the RJRI program was innovating new programming to develop economic sectors in Rhode Island. This focus on innovation is critical to RJRI, as it was meant to push partnerships to develop new ways to serve industries in need of workers and workers in need of jobs. To encourage partnerships to seek innovative strategies, the DLT specifically asked each partnership to develop "industry-led, responsive and innovative training programs."[32]

In this section, we examine how partnerships innovated in the development of their programs and services. This examination includes a focus on the history of each partnership's prior experience with the DLT, how each partnership identified the needs of the sector it sought to serve, and the industry needs partnerships identified and served. This section also includes an analysis of the basis and extent of innovation of each partnership, and examines the challenges associated with innovating new programming.

Prior Experience with the DLT

Many, but not all, of the partnerships funded by the DLT in 2016 had some level of past experience providing state-funded workforce development services. The partnerships largely fell into three groups: those with no prior experience working with the DLT, those with prior experience working with the DLT through other programs or the Governor's Workforce Board, and partnerships with some members with experience and some members without.

Figure 3.1: Partnership Experience in State Funded Workforce Development
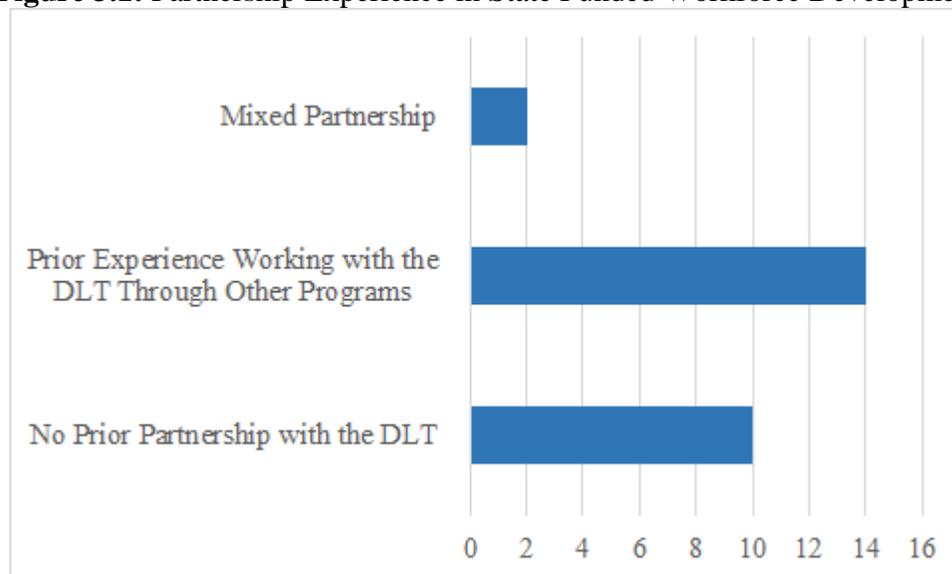
No Prior Partnership with the DLT

For some partnerships, this was because none of the organizations in the partnership had any prior experience with grant funding or workforce development training. Other partnerships

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[32] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training: *Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals*. July 31, 2015. http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/ImpG/RJRIImpGrantSol0715.pdf

had experience in workforce development, but had never formally partnered with the DLT to deliver training or delivered DLT funded training. Some partnerships developed programs through the RJRI program only after outreach from the DLT, and still other partnerships formed only as the result of DLT outreach.

Prior Experience Working with the DLT Through Other Programs
Many partnerships worked with the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) to fund and deliver workforce development training prior to the start of RJRI. Other partnerships had worked directly with the DLT prior to the start of RJRI, and implemented training programs using DLT funds prior to the start of RJRI. All of these partnerships were formed before the beginning of the RJRI program, although many added sector partners and changed their approach to workforce development as a result of RJRI planning grants.

Mixed Partnership
Two partnerships included partners that had prior experience with the DLT through the GWB but the other partners did not. In the case of the Partnership for Real IT Jobs, the lead applicant came to Rhode Island from another state and had no prior experience with the DLT, but other partners had worked with the DLT before joining the partnership. Similarly, the convener of the Urban Apprenticeship program had worked with the DLT before, but the organization that served as lead applicant and training provider in the partnership had no prior experience with the DLT.

Identifying Industry Needs

In keeping with the DLT's directive for partnerships to create "industry-led, responsive and innovative training programs," partnerships worked first to identify the key needs facing their industry.[33] Most partnerships accomplished this with needs assessments. A needs assessment is a program evaluation strategy used to assess the needs of a target population and incorporate the perspectives of industry employers and workforce intermediaries (i.e., key informants) through focus groups, committees, interviews, surveys, and workshops, among other methods. Most RJRI partnerships utilized one or more of these techniques to conduct needs assessments for their particular industry. Other partnerships utilized government and industry research to inform program development. This research provided partnerships with data on the needs of their industry, and in some cases best practices of what could be done to address those needs. Finally, some partnerships also utilized pre-existing industry relationships created through prior workforce development efforts in the industry to gauge industry needs. These partnerships relied on feedback from known industry partners to understand the type and extent of needs in the industry.
A majority of partnerships (18) used more than one method to identify industry needs, and many relied on a combination of research and input from their industry to inform their program development. Only eight partnerships used only one method to identify industry needs. Further, the methods chosen to identify industry needs relied heavily on the individual composition of each partnership, and was impacted by such factors as prior experience with

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[33] Ibid.

workforce development efforts or working with the industry, pre-existing connections within the industry, and level of knowledge about industry challenges, among other factors.

Figure 3.2: Methodologies of Identifying Sector Need

Figure 3.3: Methods Used to Conduct Industry Needs Assessment
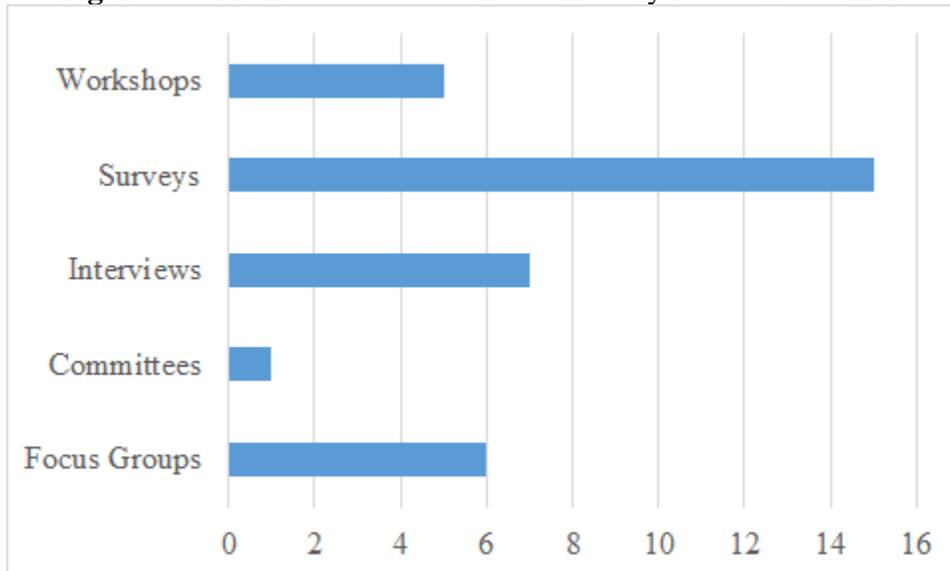
Identified Industry Needs

By utilizing these methods, partnerships identified the central issues and needs facing the industry. The needs that each partnership identified fell into three major categories: factors relating to the industry and the economy, factors relating to training, and factors relating to the

workforce.[34] Although each partnership identified unique industry issues, many needs were similar across sectors, and nearly all industries identified needs in more than one category.

Industry/Economy

Nearly every partnership identified industry needs that were related to the sector and the state's economy. Many partnerships noted that their industry was anticipating growth in coming years, as a result of either the improving economy or positive industry trends. In each of these cases, partnerships noted that the sector did not have an adequate hiring plan, recruitment strategy, or pool of workers to harness a potential increase in demand. The lack of an available pool of workers also was identified as a key issue. Many industries cited negative perceptions of the industry and the pull of lucrative out-of-state opportunities drawing talent away from Rhode Island as core reasons for their workforce shortage. Partnerships also noted that a key barrier to growth for the sector was the high cost of recruiting and training new and incumbent workers. As a result of these combined factors, many partnerships found that numerous industry jobs were not being filled and that employers were ambivalent about expanding and hiring additional workers.

Workforce

Each partnership faced a unique workforce challenge, but all identified problems with their current workforce. Many industries had a rapidly aging workforce and a lack of younger, qualified, skilled, and interested workers ready to fill the void as the older workers retired. This lack of available and skilled workers also impacted industries experiencing high rates of employee turnover. Many industries cited limited language and soft skills, transportation and childcare challenges, and, most critically, a gap between the skills potential workers possess and the skills necessary for succeeding in the sector. Other industries struggled with a lack of professional development opportunities for incumbent workers that would enable them to move up the career ladder and allow less skilled, new workers to fill the newly vacant lower positions within the industry. Finally, some industries struggled with integrating women and minorities into sectors traditionally made up of white males, but, given the changing demographics of the state, recognized that they needed to reach new populations in order to fill open positions.

Training

Nine of the 26 partnerships identified industry needs that were specifically related to the failings of current industry training programs to prepare workers for employment and growth in the sector. Many partnerships cited limited capacity in current training programs at least in part because of the limited availability of industry trainers. Many industries also described a lack of programs designed for incumbent workers to increase their skills and gain promotions. Still more industries identified challenges associated with training workers, only to have them leave the company to conduct training for other companies, states, or another industry.

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[34] These categories, and the identification of the various industry needs that are encompassed in each category, were taken from information provided by partnerships in their 2016 RJRI application and in-person interviews.

Method of Innovation

Based on the assessment of industry needs, partnerships proposed to build their sector by expanding existing programs, creating new programs, or developing new curriculum. Several partnerships combined these approaches into a multifaceted program.

Figure 3.4: Program Innovation
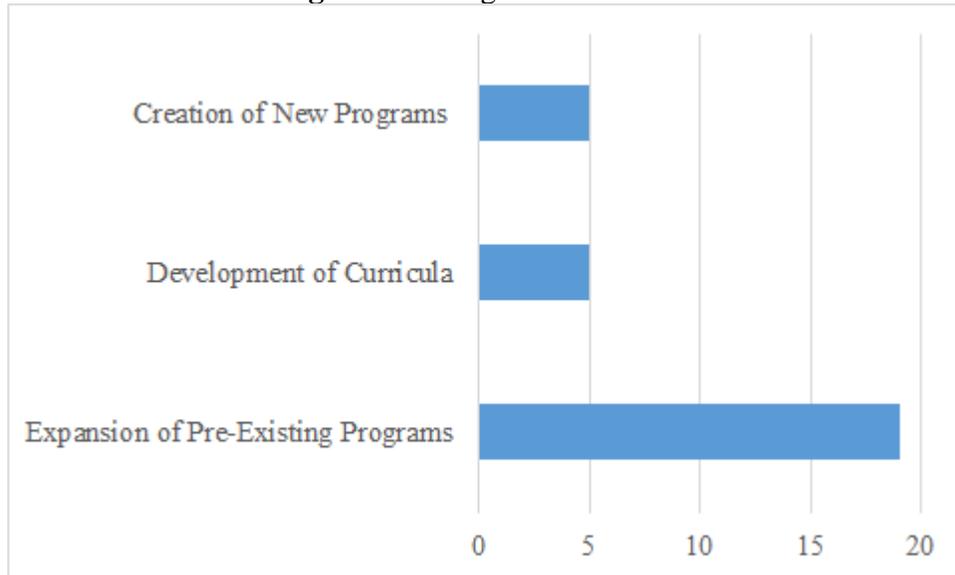
Expansion of a Pre-Existing Program

For several partnerships, RJRI funding allowed them to expand and enhance workforce training programs that the partnership had originated under the GWB. Some examples of program enhancements: offering more training programs, expanding and formalizing partnerships both within and outside their original industry partners, serving a broader population of workers, or expanding trainings and services to serve employers and workers in a larger geographic area. Some partnerships took a different route, expanding and modifying existing national program models to fit Rhode Island's industries and economy.

Development of Curricula

Several partnerships focused primarily on the creation and design of curricula offered to participants during the program. For some partnerships, the 2016 implementation period was focused chiefly on the development of the curriculum. Others developed a new curriculum, then offered a training program featuring this curriculum. Whether or not a partnership implemented its new program depended on a variety of factors, including the size and composition of the partnership, the intent of the training program (i.e., skills training vs. training for a certificate), and the prior experience of the partnership in developing curricula and implementing training programs.

Creation of New Programs

Many of these partnerships developed new programming to serve the needs of an industry that lacked formal programming for training. Other partnerships created new programs in order to reach new populations or industries. For several of these partnerships, the

development of a new training program began after the DLT asked them how it could facilitate the growth of their sector through RJRI.

Extent of Innovation

In order to fully understand each partnership's development of innovative programming and services during the 2016 implementation period, each partnership was evaluated on the extent of its innovation. Partnerships were deemed to have conducted "Fundamental Innovation" if they created a training program from scratch, fundamentally changed a pre-existing program, or formed a new partnership. In addition, partnerships that created new programs or altered existing programs to directly address industry needs were considered fundamentally innovative. Partnerships that expanded a pre-existing training program without meeting the criteria of Fundamentally Innovative programs were evaluated as programs that "Modified Programming." However, this designation does not mean that partnerships were not innovative, as every partnership innovated in some way during the 2016 implementation period.

Figure 3.5: Extent of Innovation for 2016 Partnerships
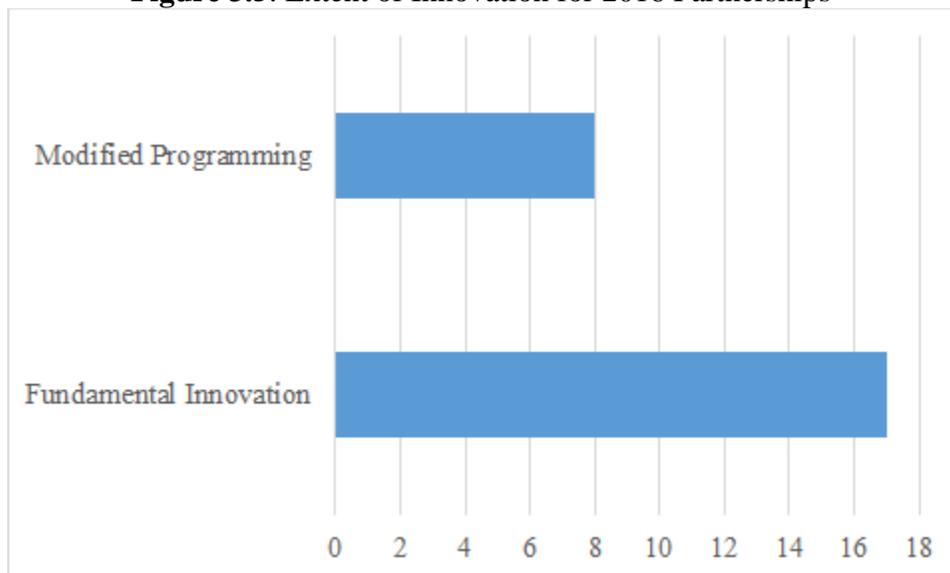
Seventeen partnerships were evaluated as having proposed a fundamental innovation. The Design Forward Partnership is a good example of a partnership that brought together parts of the industry that do not typically interact with one another. It created three original training programs that served three different populations in the design industry, and tailored each program to serve the needs of workers at all levels of the industry.

Eight partnerships modified programming. The Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program exemplifies this category. The lead applicant had a long history of offering apprenticeship programs in plumbing, pipefitting, and refrigeration, and used the RJRI program to expand into offering pre-apprenticeship programs for younger or less experienced workers from populations that had not historically been recruited for this profession. This partnership noted that while existing training programs were sufficient, there were not enough workers

coming through them to meet industry needs. As a result of its focus on a new population, it added a pre-apprenticeship training program that would ensure that participants were ready for the apprenticeship program, and was highly successful at reaching a new population with interest in the career.

Challenges

Partnerships identified few challenges with innovation during the 2016 RJRI implementation period. This was expected, given that the proposals for RJRI were required to address industry needs, and most of the partnerships received planning grants to develop programming and assess industry needs. By emphasizing innovation in the development of RJRI programming, the DLT attracted partnerships that successfully created innovative workforce development programming. However, partnerships did identify some challenges with innovation during the 2016 implementation process.

Lack of Prior Experience
For several partnerships, a lack of prior experience made the development of programming challenging. For some partnerships, a lack of prior experience working with the state made them hesitant to start working with the DLT, and they had some difficulty developing effective programming that could be funded by the RJRI program. Other partnerships had no prior experience with workforce development and struggled to develop innovative and effective programming. In addition, some partnerships had little prior experience working with the populations their RJRI programs were designed to serve and had challenges accessing and working effectively with these populations. Several partnerships were also initially apprehensive about partnering with a state agency. This hesitancy led them to struggle in uniting organizations to develop innovative programming.

Capacity Issues
A number of partnerships had unexpected capacity challenges that arose during the implementation period. These partnerships proposed innovative programming, but found that implementing the proposed programming would take more organizational capacity and planning than expected for the program to be successful in their industry. For some partnerships, this led to a restructuring and refocusing of their plan for the 2016 implementation period, while others were able to overcome this challenge and implement their program as planned.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices from the DLT for innovation emerged:
- Fund planning grants to help sectors build partnerships and assess industry need.
- Require proposals for funding to explain how the proposal addresses a verified industry need.

Recommendations

The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to help partnerships create innovative workforce development programming:

- Encourage experienced DLT partners to work with organizations, employers, and businesses interested in RJRI opportunities.
- Include a section addressing the ability of partnerships to deliver programming to help foresee capacity issues.
- Allow partnerships to apply for a second-round planning grant to assess and evaluate innovative programs and retool them to better meet industry needs.
- Encourage partnerships to present the ways in which they are innovating and how their innovation addresses sector needs at RJRI events. This may help other partnerships learn about ways of innovating that could fit their sector as well.

Section 4: Partnerships

A central objective of the RJRI program was to create and cultivate industry-led partnerships that could offer programming to advance the skills of Rhode Island's workforce and develop a pipeline of workers that could expedite sustainable sector growth. To facilitate sector partnerships, the RJRI program sought to identify, support, and help grow workforce intermediaries in key employment sectors. In this section we examine the partnerships formed by individual grantees and address the common challenges and successes faced by these partnerships. We also present best practices and our recommendations for future partnerships. This analysis is based on information provided during interviews with grantees and RJRI grant administrators.

Twenty-six partnerships were formed during the 2016 RJRI Implementation grant. Each partnership involved a group of employer partners, industry organizations, training providers, educational organizations, and other supporters. Each partnership was asked to include at least five employers from the target industry and representatives from two diverse entities, such as nonprofits, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, local workforce boards, local governments, regional or local economic development entities, local departments of social services, labor unions, K-12 programs, industry associations, philanthropic organizations, and other training providers. Despite this direction, not all partnerships met the minimum requirements for partnership formation. There was wide variation in the numbers of partners across the various partnerships, ranging from four to 46. Some partnerships continued to add partners over the course of implementing their program.

Table 4.1: Number of Partners for Each Grantee Included in the Grant Proposal

Partnerships	Number of Partners
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership	15
Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program	8
Residential Construction Partnership	15
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program	4
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative	14
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership	24
Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island	6
Healthy Jobs RI	43
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership	14
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership	10
Healthcare Training Collaborative	7

MedTech Innovation Engine	20
Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership	31
Insurance Innovation Partnership	8
Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative	15
Aquaculture Training Partnership	22
Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership	11
Building Futures Partnership	12
Real Jobs IT Partnership	34
CNA Talent Network Partnership	14
Phoenix Partnership	9
Partnership for Real IT Jobs	11
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women	11
Design Forward Partnership	9
Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership	46
Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island	11
Note: This number was calculated from the partners listed in each grantee's proposal and any additions mentioned in interviews. This calculation does not reflect the current status of each partnership, nor does it reflect every partner that joined or left partnerships during the 2016 implementation.	

Each of these partnerships was established by a primary grantee/lead applicant who oversaw initial partner recruitment and partnership formation. The primary grantee for each partnership was identified as the convener willing to coordinate the team of partners in pursuit of a common goal, to lead or assist in the development of program development and training activities, and to conduct ongoing management and administration of the program to meet performance targets and achieve goals. Twenty-one partnerships were led by workforce intermediaries (i.e., organizations that address industry needs while considering the needs of both employers and employees), and five of the partnerships were led by employer organizations. While each partnership's leadership was unique, the organization type of the primary grantee included:

- Industry Associations
- Training Providers
- Colleges/Universities
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Labor Unions
- Employers

Table 4.2: Primary Grantee by Organization Type

Partnerships	Industry Association	Training Provider	College/ University	Non-Profit Organization	Labor Union	Employer
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership	√					
Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program						√
Residential Construction Partnership	√					
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program		√				
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative				√		
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership	√					
Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island						√
Healthy Jobs RI			√			
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership				√		
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership						√
Healthcare Training Collaborative						√
MedTech Innovation Engine				√		
Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership	√					
Insurance Innovation Partnership	√					
Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative	√					
Aquaculture Training Partnership				√		
Construction Trades Skill-				√		

Up Partnership						
Building Futures Partnership				√		
Real Jobs IT Partnership				√		
CNA Talent Network Partnership					√	
Phoenix Partnership						√
Partnership for Real IT Jobs				√		
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women				√		
Design Forward Partnership				√		
Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership	√					
Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island				√		

Partnership Challenges

Sector strategies are often challenging because they require partnerships across private, public, and nonprofit entities, which frequently have a history of distrust. Also, sector strategies bring together groups of employers that often view themselves as competitors.[35] In addition, working in groups to institute a large workforce development program is challenging. The following section discusses the most common challenges encountered by RJRI grantees in relation to their partnership activities.

Figure 4.1: Partnership Challenges

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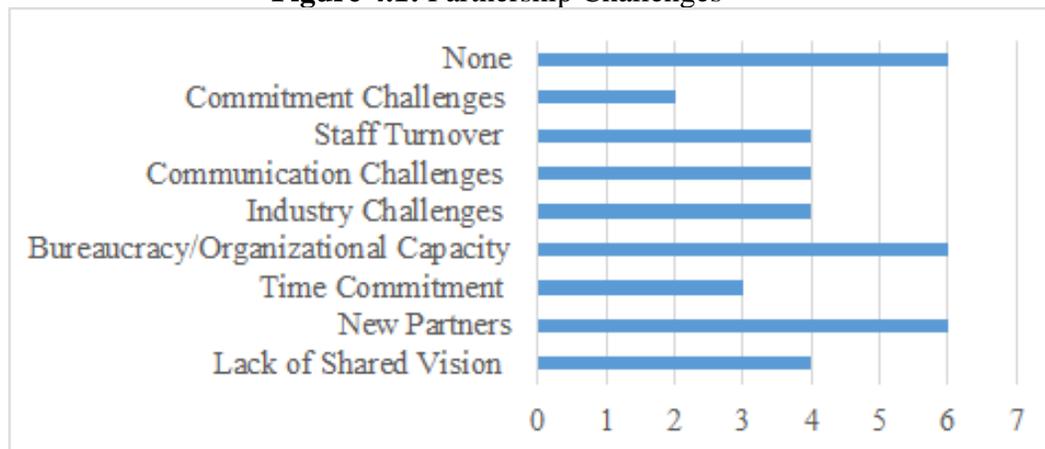
[35] Taylor, Colin. *Employer Engagement in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*. 2011. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

Communication Challenges

Six partnerships struggled with communication. These partnerships had issues of miscommunication between partnership leadership and partners that led to confusion. For example, one larger partnership found it difficult to respond to and follow through on all requests from employer partners, and another partnership had difficulties with communication between the main partner and a subcontractor. In one situation, a breakdown in communication between an employer and training partner kept one training from happening. Four of the partnerships faced challenges with staff turnover among the main partnership organizations during the implementation grant year. The loss or change of key staff members resulted in a breakdown of communication between the lead applicant and partners for partnerships and setbacks in program implementation for other partnerships. For example, the two staff members at St. Antoine Residence who conceptualized and spearheaded the Healthcare Training Collaborative both left St. Antoine's during the 2016 implementation period, and one of the Healthcare Training Collaborative's partners eliminated the position of an employee who was the primary contact person between St. Antoine's and this partner. These occurrences greatly impacted the implementation of the partnership's training programs.

Lack of Shared Vision within the Partnership

Six partnerships struggled to establish and maintain a unified vision between all partners. Some partnerships, like the Construction Trade Skill-Up Partnership, struggled to agree on the obstacles facing their industry and disagreed over the best methods to overcome those obstacles. Other partnerships, like the CNA Talent Network, had to work to reconcile the differing opinions between major partners concerning the overall goals and purpose of their partnership. Finally, some partnerships that worked with diverse populations, such as the Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women, faced difficulties with cultural sensitivity and acceptance of new diverse employees among their employer partners.

New Partners

Six partnerships had difficulties identifying and working with new partners (meaning partners the primary grantee had never worked with before). The lead applicants of several partnerships, such as the Aquaculture Training Partnership, struggled to find new employer partners to work with the partnership. These lead applicants faced difficulties in convincing potential new partners of the value of proposed training and services and overcoming differing opinions within the industry about the proposed training model. These partnerships also had to help small businesses overcome a reluctance to work in collaboration with large companies and work with partners who had little prior experience in training a large number of workers. Other partnerships, like the Phoenix Partnership, faced difficulties in incorporating new partners into existing partnerships. Some partnerships struggled to balance an increased number of interests in partnership decision-making and found it hard to schedule meetings when the number of partners grew over time. Other partnerships struggled to expand their partnership across the state or across their industry due to a lack of effective connections.

Bureaucracy and Organizational Capacity

Six partnerships faced difficulties that resulted from working with bureaucracy both within and outside of their industry. Some partnerships, like the Rhode Island Financial Skills

Initiative, worked with higher education institutions to implement their programs and services but struggled with the bureaucratic requirements of those institutions. Other partnerships, like the RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative, underestimated the organizational capacity that was needed to successfully implement their programs and services, and struggled to meet the staffing, organizational, and bureaucratic challenges that arose during program implementation. In addition, partnerships found that some employer partners simply did not have the capacity to adapt their systems to assist with the training and hiring of training participants. Other partnerships struggled to meet all of the goals stated in their proposals due to organizational capacity issues.

Industry Challenges

Six partnerships faced challenges in working with their industry. Several, like the Aquaculture Training Partnership, had issues of competition between partners that hindered their ability to implement their training program. This included difficulties in identifying new employer partners that were competitors with other employers already in the partnership and concerns about training workers who might then leave and start their own companies. Two partnerships had employer partners who were unable to follow through on commitments to offer internships or to hire or train partnership trainees. Other partnerships struggled to convince all partners to adapt programs and services to meet changing industry needs. Some partnerships also had difficulty differentiating their programs from similar services being offered to their industry.

Time Commitment

Three partnerships found it challenging to fulfill the time commitment required to be a partner. This took several forms. For some partnerships, like the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, it was difficult to attract new partners to the partnership due to the time commitment and responsibility required. Others, especially those that worked with small businesses, like the Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership, found that small businesses were hesitant to join partnerships because they were reluctant to spend time away from the workings of their company. In addition, several partnerships struggled to maintain regular partner attendance and participation at meetings and in other efforts, and several partners dropped out of the partnership as a result of the time commitment and effort required. Other partnerships overcame these issues by: planning ahead for meetings; compensating partners for time spent in meetings; clearly articulating expected commitment for planning meetings; inviting partners to meetings only if their specific expertise was necessary; rotating meeting locations to ensure equal obligations for travel times for all partners; clearly communicating the level of commitment expected from each partner in every step of the planning and implementation process; having employers commit in writing to hiring trainees upon completion; and ensuring commitment from top leaders of the employer partners.

Effective Partnership Strategies

Many RJRI grantees had successful and thriving partnerships even in the face of challenges. Here we describe the most prominent strategies employed across grantees who viewed their partnerships as successful.

Figure 4.2: Effective Partnership Strategies
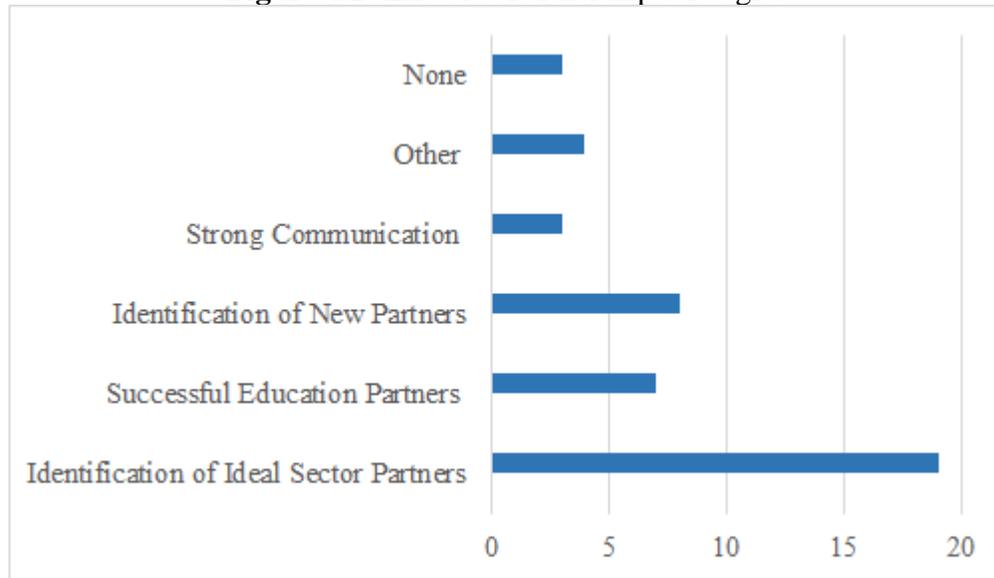
Identification of Ideal Sector Partners

Sixteen partnerships were able to successfully identify and recruit strong industry and employer partners. These grantees found partners who shared the partnerships' overall vision, were willing and able to train workers for the industry, were able to quickly hire trainees into jobs, and were committed to the goals and work of the partnership. Some partnerships, such as the Marine Trades and Composites Partnership, were able to rely on strong, existing connections within their industry to recruit partners, while others, like the Design Forward Partnership, were able to take advantage of a cohesive and open industry culture to recruit partners. Other partnerships noted successes due to having identified a reciprocal relationship among partners (where each partner is able to help the other out in some way), which helped contribute to the sustainability of the training program. For example, in the Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program, the primary applicant, Claflin Medical Equipment, provided free or reduced rate services to the Rhode Island Free Clinic, and the clinic provided an environment for the apprentices to gain knowledge and skills.

Successful Education Partners

Seven partnerships identified and worked with education partners that were on board with the idea and enabled the partnership to successfully implement its training programs and services. Some partnerships, like the Aquaculture Training Partnership, worked with institutions of higher education that had the capacity to design and implement new curricula and train a large number of workers. Others, such as the Residential Construction Partnership, successfully partnered with state career technical education schools to raise awareness of their industry and create education to career pipelines. In addition, multiple partnerships worked with flexible education providers who were able to start trainings when partnership participants were ready to maximize the efficiency of the partnership's training programs.

Identification of New Partners

Numerous grantees created partnerships that expanded beyond industry limits and effectively connected employers, training providers, and industries that normally operate separately to work toward common goals. Some of these partnerships, which included the Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program, were able to easily find and incorporate new partners into their partnerships through successfully designed and implemented marketing campaigns. Others, like Healthy Jobs RI, connected organizations that did not usually work with their industry or traditionally functioned in separate silos from other companies. For some partnerships, such as the Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership, their innovative recruitment strategies helped connect industry organizations that never would have interacted before and led to new collaboration and work within the industry. In some sectors partnerships can work at cross-purposes by overwhelming employers with training options, but this can be overcome by coordinating and presenting all training options to employer partners.

Strong Communication

Four partnerships cited strong and effective communication as a key element that made their partnership a success. For several of these, such as Healthy Jobs RI, open communication strengthened trust between the partnership and the industry and encouraged more open collaboration. For others, like the Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership, clear communication also helped increase trust and collaboration within the partnership itself. Some strategies for creating strong communication included: holding regularly scheduled meetings to get feedback on the programs and ensure partner engagement through the process; rotating meeting sites across industry partners to ensure equity in travel expectations; and using commitment letters to ensure ongoing commitment to the training program from employer partners.

Other Successes

Many partnerships used other successful partnership strategies. Some, like Healthy Jobs RI and the Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership, relied on a strong central leadership team to guide partnership activity. Others cited the flexibility of their partners in adapting to changes in industry needs and partnership training as a key strength. Partnerships like the Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program also cited the use of existing training programs as a source of success. In addition, partnerships like MedTech Innovation Engine asserted that their industry culture and connections improved as a result of mentor/mentee relationships built between partners.

Use of Workforce Intermediaries

One key successful strategy that bears emphasis, but was not discussed during the interviews, is the importance of having workforce intermediaries lead the RJRI partnerships. Workforce intermediaries are defined as any organization, including labor unions, non-profits, and dedicated industry associations, that assists its chosen industry while considering the needs of both industry employers and employees.[36] Because of their connections to the entire sector, they are able to facilitate relationships across employers, know the needs of employers in the

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[36] Department of Labor. *Workforce intermediaries: Strategic connections for youth with disabilities.* (n.d.) https://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/workforce.htm

industry, and have the capacity to serve employees in the industry. Also, because they specifically help the entire sector, they can lead partnerships without the concerns of competition, overworked staff, and establishing connections within and outside the industry that impact companies who seek to lead partnerships. As such, while some employer-led grants were successful, others found it challenging to develop a sector-based training program due to a lack of connections with other employers and so a key strategy for success identified among many partnerships was working with or being led by a workforce intermediary.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices for partnerships emerged:

Related to the type of organization the main applicant represents:
- Work with industry workforce intermediaries that know industry norms, industry needs, and have industry connections.
  - allows the partnership to be efficient and actually serve industry needs as well as utilize networks to encourage partner recruitment and the hiring of trainees
- Use the lead applicant as an intermediary between trainers and employers to ensure effective leadership, communication, and collaboration.
- With larger partnerships, have two main contacts to manage inquiries and partnership requests.

Related to partnership meetings and commitment:
- Utilize a facilitator to write grants, facilitate meetings, and assist in organization and decision-making if the lead applicant is not a workforce intermediary and has little prior experience or capacity to effectively take on these duties.
- Employ effective strategies for planning partnership meetings. Effective strategies include:
  - planning ahead for meetings
  - compensating partners for time spent in meetings
  - clearly articulating expected commitment for planning meetings
  - inviting partners to meetings only if their specific expertise is necessary
  - rotating meeting locations to ensure equal obligations for travel times for all partners
- Identify effective strategies for ensuring partner commitment and maintaining participation. Effective strategies include:
  - clearly communicating the level of commitment expected from each partner in every step of the planning and implementation process
  - having employers commit in writing to hiring trainees upon completion
  - Ensuring commitment from top leaders of the employer partners
- Convene an advisory board to help with curriculum development, training implementation, and new partnership identification.
- Include employers in the recruitment and potential trainee assessment process to ensure employee fit and increase level of support among employers.
- Ensure partners have a shared mission and create a culture of collaboration within the partnership to continuously motivate partnership participation.

Related to partnership formation:
- Identify specific partners to meet the needs of the target population and the industry. Effective strategies include:
    - identifying multiple employer partners to provide trainees many options based on their skills and interests (when partnerships have multiple options or tracks within their training programs)
    - continuing to identify new partners to help with program sustainability
    - being open to unlikely partners and targeting multiple industries for partners
    - identifying partners with extensive networks and an existing social media presence
- Identify effective education providers. Effective education providers feature:
    - instructors with industry knowledge and higher education experience
    - the ability to design and execute training programs in close collaboration with businesses looking to hire new workers
    - the ability to create training programs to meet the needs of different components of the sector
    - the capability to be flexible with the payment and reporting needs of the program
- Help to identify partners within the grant that can reciprocally benefit one another.

Related to encountering barriers:
- Work with all partners to identify solutions to unexpected barriers and adapt plans if necessary.
- Ensure that partners are willing and able to be flexible in case of partnership adaptation to meet changing industry needs.
- When it becomes evident that a partnership lacks capacity, prepare to intervene and adapt the program so that the partnership can reorganize, build capacity, and adopt a strategic vision.
- Develop a unifying and inspiring mission for the partnership.

Recommendations

The Real Jobs Rhode Island Program focused on creating "industry-led partnerships to advance the skills of the State's workforce, grow the State's economy and increase sustainable employment for working families." Successful partnerships are essential to the success of the RJRI mission. The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure the success of RJRI partnerships.

- Ensure that workforce intermediaries are the lead grantee when possible.
- Help identify industry leaders to lead the partnership when the industry does not have an existing workforce intermediary.
- Encourage the use of an outside facilitator when one employer partner is the main applicant or encourage them to route the program through an intermediary.
- Help identify valuable additional partners that could benefit the partnership and benefit from being in the partnership, while also finding a mechanism for streamlining processes so that the partnership is not overwhelmed in managing partnership requests and inquiries.

- Include main applicants that do not provide training programs themselves (and instead refer to other existing trainings) as sub-contractors for multiple other grants to enable these partnerships to focus on providing employee support services and less time on administrative issues.
- Ensure that grantees have the organizational capacity and an adequate plan to fulfill all goals listed in proposals.
- Provide aid to struggling partnerships. Such aid could include:
    - encouraging partnerships to work with higher education partners to help legitimize training and jobs within the sector
    - convening employer partners to educate them about issues and brainstorm potential solutions
- Connect successful employer and training partners with workforce intermediaries to assist in the organization and leadership of the partnership.
- Help grantees understand how to build workforce intermediary development and stabilization into their grants.
- Provide resources to expand the partnership to more employer partners to help with training recruitment and sustainability.
- Provide support for partnerships that experience major staff turnover within their leadership and ensure that the program is supported by the institutions (and the sector).
- Provide support to help establish connections and relationships for partnerships that are expanding geographically.
- Provide a template accountability function for main applicants to ensure that partners uphold commitments.
- Identify mechanisms for working with higher education institutions to help partnerships avoid/overcome bureaucratic challenges.
- Facilitate communication and collaboration between partnerships so that they do not offer training programs within the same sector.
- Maintain a focus on employer partner needs and the financial needs of employers and trainees.
- Encourage partnerships to hold regular meetings to help ensure follow-through while also balancing the "asks" of industry so that partners don't feel overburdened by the time commitment.
- Help partnerships come together so that they do not offer similar/competing training programs within the same sector.

Section 5: Sustainability

A key factor in creating a sector-based workforce development program is sustainability of programming. In this section, we examine how partnerships created plans for a sustainable sector partnership of workforce and economic development. Partnerships were asked to describe in the their grant proposals their plans to "work towards the sustainability of the Partnership in the absence of state funding."[37,38] This section addresses the plans partnerships made for the sustainability of their workforce development programs, an evaluation of each partnership's likelihood of sustainability, best practices used by the partnerships evaluated to have a high likelihood of sustainability without state funding, and recommendations for improving future partnerships' likelihood of sustainability.

Likelihood of Sustainability

Based on our review of the grant application, addenda, and interviews with the lead applicant of the grant, we assessed the likely sustainability of each program without state funding. Those evaluated as "Likely Sustainable" provided strong plans for sustainability without state funding, had a vibrant and functioning partnership, and expressed confidence in the sustainability of both their programs and their sector partnership. Those evaluated as "Possibly Sustainable" fit multiple descriptions. These partnerships reported that only a portion of their programs could be sustained without state funding, offered plans for sustainability that relied on the continuation of state funding for several years to build capacity, had an unstable relationship with their sector partners but had plans to either change or maintain this relationship, relied on substantial changes in the industry in order to be sustainable, or presented a plan for sustainability that did not indicate the same high level of confidence, preparation, or thoroughness as those presented by partnerships evaluated to be "Likely Sustainable." Those partnerships evaluated as "Unlikely Sustainable" also fit a myriad of descriptions. These partnerships explicitly stated they would either be unlikely or unwilling to continue offering programs without state funding, had broken or failing relationships with their sector partners, or expressed a lack of interest in continuing their partnership in future years.

Overall, 13 partnerships had a strong likelihood of continuing either immediately or in the near future without state aid. For example, the Phoenix Partnership planned to become the primary, independent funder of its programming and establish a provisional structure for management and funding of its partnership in the absence of state funding. The core of its plan for sustainability centered on creating a partnership in which each member had a strong commitment to the goals and services of the partnership and was willing to help the partnership itself become the primary backer of the partnership's programing. Likewise, the Marine Trades and Composites Partnership, led by the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association, used RJRI money as a new funding source to continue and expand previously existing training programs. If it can no longer utilize state funding, the partnership planned to rely on the Rhode Island Marine

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[37] In the context of this evaluation, "state funding" refers to all state workforce development funds, including funds dispensed through the RJRI program and other state workforce development initiatives.

[38] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training: *Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals*. July 31, 2015. http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/ImpG/RJRIImpGrantSol0715.pdf

Trades Association and utilize the funding sources that originally supported the partnership's programs to fund similar but scaled down iterations of its current programs. As a result, the partnership is highly confident in the stability and future sustainability of its programs and partnership. These partnerships, which are just two examples of numerous grants, exemplify the criteria of grants likely to be sustainable.

Five partnerships had plans that suggested they could possibly become sustainable without state funding. For example, the Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program worked with the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) to integrate its Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist training into CCRI's curriculum and planned to connect program participants to CCRI credits and an associate degree program during training. However, the partnership is unsure whether its industry will continue to support the Data Scientist Training and employ program graduates, and, as a result, is unsure whether its entire program will be sustainable in the future. The Man Up 2 Careers Partnership is another good example. This partnership planned to create a manufacturing social enterprise business that provides jobs for its target population while also funding the partnership's programs and services. However, the partnership needs several years to build the funds, capacity, and organization to establish this business, and will be reliant on state funding during that period. As a result, this partnership could be sustainable if state funding remains available for multiple years, but is unlikely to be sustainable if state funding is unavailable in the near future.

Eight partnerships appear unlikely to continue without state financing. These partnerships were split between those that could not continue without state funding and others that were unwilling to continue without state funding. A good example of the former is the Healthcare Training Collaborative. This partnership was led by St. Antoine Residence, a private eldercare facility. Although St. Antoine's will continue to provide CNA training for its own employees, it did not wish to continue to pursue a partnership that would work with the healthcare sector at this time. In contrast, the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, led by Electric Boat, noted that it was unlikely to continue offering training programs and services without state funding. The partnership is strong, the programs and services are in high demand and will likely last with state funding, but Electric Boat is hesitant to absorb the cost of the partnership's programs and services into its budget.

Table 5.1: Likelihood of Sustainability

Partnership	Likely Sustainable	Possibly Sustainable	Unlikely Sustainable
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership	√		
Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program		√	
Residential Construction Partnership			√
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program		√	
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative	√		
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership	√		
Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island	√		

Healthy Jobs RI Partnership	√		
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership		√	
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership			√
Healthcare Training Collaborative			√
MedTech Innovation Engine	√		
Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership			√
Insurance Innovation Partnership			√
Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative			√
Aquaculture Training Partnership	√		
Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership		√	
Building Futures Partnership	√		
Real Jobs IT Partnership	√		
CNA Talent Network Partnership		√	
Phoenix Partnership	√		
Partnership for Real IT Jobs			√
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women			√
Design Forward Partnership	√		
Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership	√		
Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island	√		

Plans for Sustainability

While each partnership presented a distinct picture of its relative sustainability, several themes dominated the plans. These are models that other sectors could utilize to sustain their programming. Several partnerships also plan to employ multiple approaches to ensure sustainability.

Fee for Service
         Eleven partnerships planned to begin offering programming under a fee-for-service model in which companies interested in the program pay to have the program offered to new or incumbent workers, or where individuals interested in entering the field pay for programming. For example, the Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island planned to provide access to its programs and services for a fee that is paid by either individual employees or employers, while the Construction Trades Skill Up Partnership had been approached by

employers to expand its services to the wider construction industry. Other partnerships, such as the RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative, planned to ask its industry companies to pay to continue to provide programming to serve the entire sector. The CNA Talent Network Partnership planned to charge employers for tailored services for each employer's training needs.

Utilization of Colleges and Universities
        Four of the sustainability plans included sustainable training programs offered through local colleges and universities. These partnerships worked with higher education institutions to build or reform curricula to meet the industry's needs. Some partnerships, like the Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program and the Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership, integrated their programs into existing curricula at colleges and universities. The training could, therefore, be offered without the oversight of the partnership and without state funding as long as there is a steady stream of students interested in the career path and the universities continue to offer the courses. Others, like Healthy Jobs RI, planned to offer their programs as independent certificate courses housed within existing departments at colleges and universities. Finally, some partnerships, like the Aquaculture Training Partnership, worked with colleges and universities to design portions of its programs that were run in collaboration with the institutions and could be supported with university funds.

Other Funding Sources
        Under this model, partnerships planned to rely on alternative sources of grant funding to maintain their programs and services. Some of the partnerships that proposed this plan, like the Marine Trades and Composites Partnership, had offered its programs and services under different funding streams prior to applying for RJRI funding, and planned to revert back to these sources of funding if they could no longer access RJRI funds. Other partnerships, like Design Forward and Man Up, Inc., identified other sources of potential funding for their programs such as local foundation funds or federal grants, designed their programs with the requirements of these other funding streams in mind, and planned to apply for funding from these sources when they could no longer access RJRI funding or when restrictions from one funding source needed to be overcome by another source. Several partnerships, including Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership and CNA Talent Network, planned to be sustainable through a combination of funds from government and philanthropic organizations such as Community Development Block Grants and the United Way.

Entrepreneurial Endeavors for Self-Sustainability
        This model describes those partnerships that developed a unique method of ensuring their sustainability. These methods usually were designed to develop an entrepreneurial enterprise to fund the partnership's programs and services. For example, the Aquaculture Training Partnership planned to run an aquaculture farm that will function as a training facility for workers and provide funds for the training by selling products produced by the farm. The Man Up 2 Careers Partnership planned to create a manufacturing social enterprise business that provides jobs for its target population while also funding the partnership's programs and services. While only two partnerships currently have a plan that includes an entrepreneurial activity, it is a promising model that is particularly well-suited for sustainability and can be adopted by other sectors.

No Plan for Sustainability

Two partnerships, the Healthcare Training Collaborative and the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, presented no real plan for sustainability. The Healthcare Training Collaborative is not planning to continue its partnership, and the lead applicant plans to offer its training programs to its own employees only. The Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership similarly does not have a plan to be sustainable, since it is very hesitant about continuing to offer training without state funding.

Other

Some partnerships offered other plans for sustainability not captured by the above themes and, as a result, do not clearly offer models that can be adopted by other partnerships. For example, the Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program planned to offer new programming that does not require RJRI funding but maintains the partnership's relevance to its industry and provides a reason for partner companies to continue working with one another. Other partnerships, like MedTech Innovation Engine, planned to alter the composition of its partnership and program offerings in order to become sustainable.

Table 5.2: Plans for Sustainability

Partnership	Fee for Service	Utilization of Colleges and Universities	Other Funding Sources	Innovation/ Entrepreneurship	Other or N/A
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership		√	√		
Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program		√			
Residential Construction Partnership	√				
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program					√
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative	√				
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership			√		
Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island	√				
Healthy Jobs RI Partnership	√	√			
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership				√	
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership			√		√
Healthcare Training Collaborative					√

MedTech Innovation Engine					√
Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership			√		
Insurance Innovation Partnership	√		√		
Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative	√		√		
Aquaculture Training Partnership		√		√	
Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership	√				
Building Futures Partnership			√		
Real Jobs IT Partnership					√
CNA Talent Network Partnership			√		
Phoenix Partnership	√				√
Partnership for Real IT Jobs	√				
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women					√
Design Forward Partnership	√		√		
Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership			√		
Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island	√		√		

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices emerged.

Sector partnerships can be more confident in their sustainability if they:
- Have extensive industry buy-in and engagement in the creation, design, and implementation of programs.
- Engage industry employers in regular sessions to provide feedback on the success and usefulness of the partnership and develop plans for revising programming based on industry feedback.
- Engage a workforce intermediary or trade organization in a leadership role.
- Design very flexible programming models.
- Design programming that is eligible for sponsorship from other funding sources.
- Design programming that addresses a concrete industry need rather than programming that addresses unstable industry demands or issues that the industry is not invested in.

Recommendations

The Real Jobs Rhode Island Program piloted new approaches to workforce and economic development for the state that were intended to be sustainable if and when the program no longer had funding for workforce development. Partnerships encountered many challenges and successes while planning for and implementing sustainable programs. The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure the sustainability of future RJRI programming.

- Ensure programming is led by a workforce intermediary, and if a single employer is the lead applicant, identify a facilitator to help coordinate the partnership.
- Connect partnerships that are providing similar services so they can share ideas, work together, and avoid duplicating services in the same industry or geographic area.
- Where no sector-organization/workforce intermediary is available, continue to bring employers together to create a workforce intermediary that serves the entire sector.
- Strive to connect community organizations that work with un- and underemployed populations to partnerships that are experiencing difficulties recruiting for their programming. This will enable partnerships to identify potential employees for training as well as be able to better understand and overcome barriers that impede those populations.
- Connect partnerships with experienced, successful training providers that have served other partnerships well and can deliver programming needed by multiple sectors. This will potentially facilitate an alignment between training curricula and employer demand while increasing the likelihood of moving trainees from training to employment.
- Engage employers in a conversation or focus group about why some employers who appear to be benefiting from RJRI-sponsored programming seem uninterested in funding programming in the absence of state support.
- Facilitate discussions with partnerships about what motivates them to self-fund their programming and remain engaged in designing and reforming the sector's training programs.
- Encourage statewide discussions about why certain sectors are ambivalent about working to sustain and build sector economic growth and develop strategies to overcome this ambivalence.
- Ensure that out-of-state training providers have an established connection and familiarity with in-state employers.

Section 6: Recruitment and Outreach

In this section we examine the methods by which partnerships recruited participants for their programs. If RJRI and other economic development programs are successful and the national economy continues to improve, recruiting and outreach may become much more difficult. Overall, RJRI partners came very close to reaching their targets for recruitment in 2016. Partnerships set an overall goal of recruiting 1,333 workers into programming and 1,116 workers were successfully recruited into partnership programming. However, in the pilot year of RJRI, partnerships struggled with recruiting workers in a tight economy, as there were fewer people out of work. As a result, it is critical for sectors in need of workers to employ effective recruitment and training strategies and to think outside the box and rely on a range of strategies to identify and recruit potential workers for their industry. As we will discuss, it is particularly important that sectors create plans to recruit in communities and from populations with higher than average unemployment or underemployment, or who currently are employed in low wage, non-career jobs. In addition, sector partnerships will need to create effective "green housing" strategies to reach students still in school. This will also allow partnerships to reach and develop the next generation workforce before they become un- or underemployed. Many of the practices utilized by RJRI grantees can be adopted and employed in other industries that may face continued issues in hiring.

Figure 6.1: Recruitment Performance Metrics by Partnership
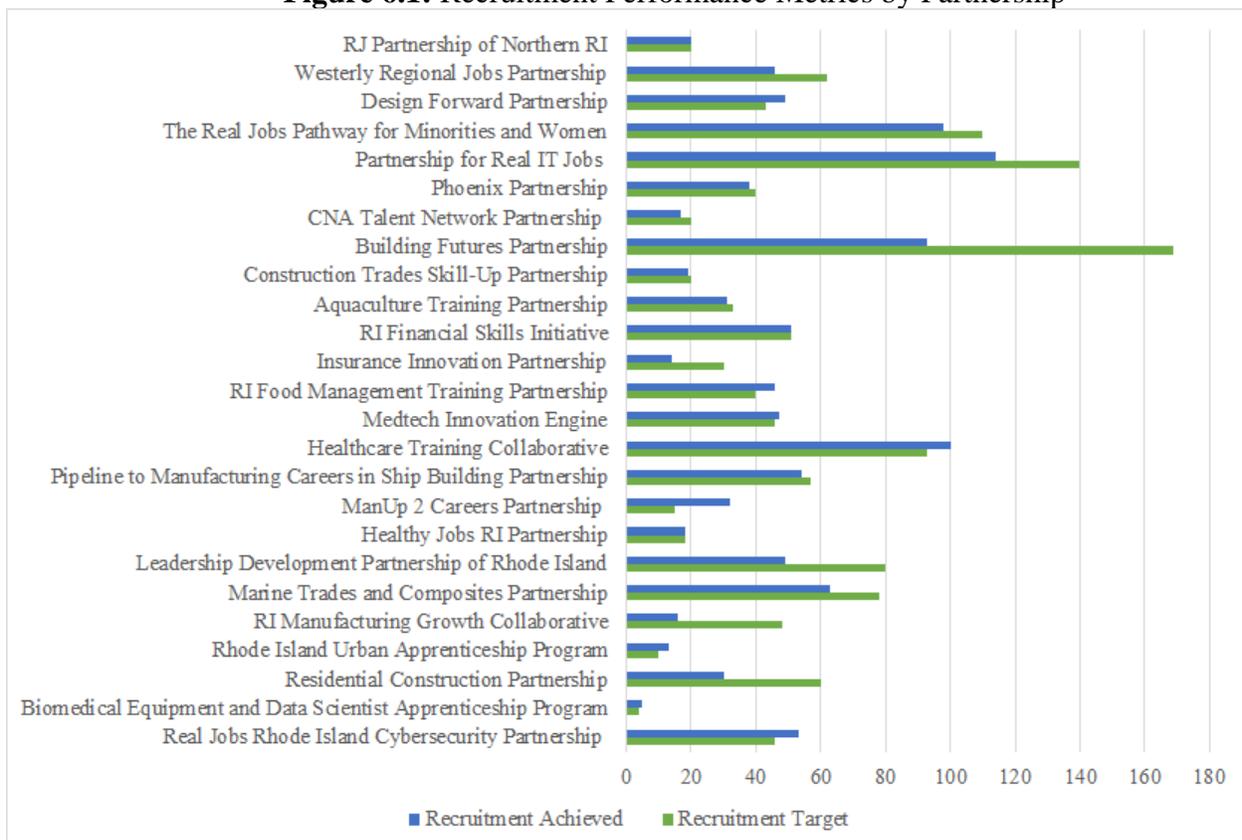
Recruitment Challenges

A number of RJRI grantees encountered considerable challenges in recruitment, outreach, and retention of participants. While many grantees had unique challenges, the following section discusses some of the most common challenges grantees encountered.

Trust and Understanding of Career-Pipeline Programs

Trust and a thorough understanding of the programs were crucial to the success of recruitment efforts. When either of these elements was lacking, partners and potential trainees became frustrated. The Real Jobs of Northern Rhode Island Partnership found that potential recruits often lacked understanding of careers and the career-pipeline process, which slowed recruitment. The Urban Apprenticeship Program, likewise, found that there was a lack of trust among participants that they would actually receive jobs after training. This was due to recruits not understanding how career-pipeline programs work. Some target communities also had little faith in government-run jobs programs, which decreased willingness to participate. Having "the face" of the program be an employer or community organization proved a good way to overcome barriers in trust and to educate potential recruits about how career pipeline training works.

Payment & Cost

Many people are hesitant to take on paying for a training program when there is no guarantee of a job at the end. Unlike a two- or four-year college degree, industry training programs do not always have the reputation for positive employment outcomes that make trainees feel it is worth it to invest scarce financial resources in a training program. As a result, several partnerships found that the cost of tuition was a barrier to recruitment. For example, the Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership attempted to offer financial incentives and keep tuition costs low. However, even with the reduced rate, recruits still were discouraged by the cost of the program. Programs that were not only free but also paid for participants' time were more likely to achieve better recruitment results. Across all the grants, paid programs achieved 88.3 percent of the total combined recruitment goals (recruiting a total of 698 workers into programming), compared with unpaid programs, which achieved 77 percent of their total combined recruitment goal (recruiting a total of 418 workers into programming).

Figure 6.2: Recruitment in Partnership Programming
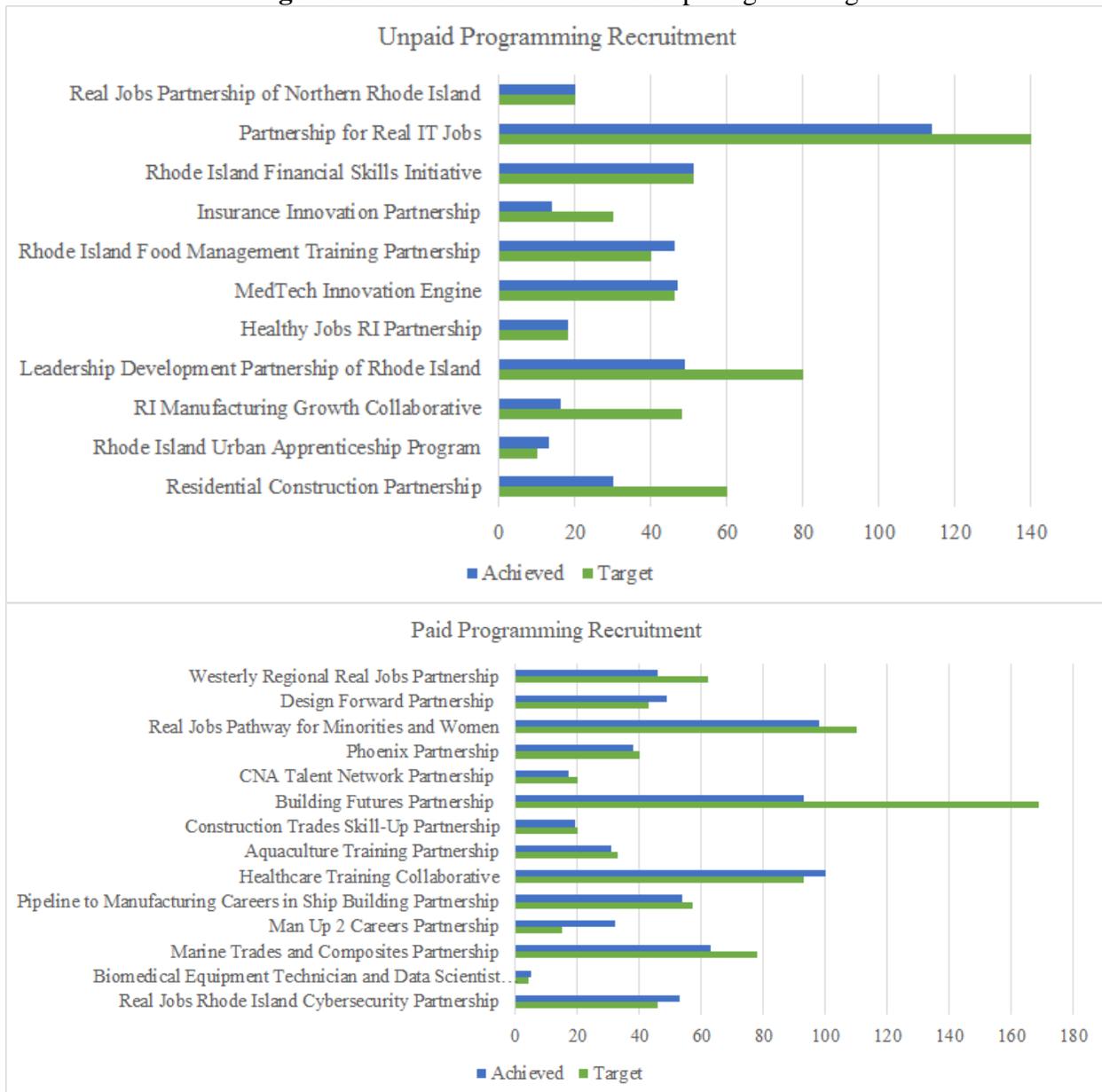
Finding the Right Place and Time, for Recruitment

The logistics of finding the right place for recruitment was a very common challenge among many of the partnerships. Some partnerships relied heavily on the DLT's One Stop Career Centers for recruits, but with fewer people being laid off and more people working, in many instances this did not produce the number of recruits they had envisioned. In other cases, partnerships wish they had been able to utilize the One Stop Centers more than they did. Timing of recruitment activities also proved to be an important factor that was challenging for some grantees. For example, the Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program

had planned initially to recruit soon-to-be graduates from a partner organization program but found that many of the potential recruits already had jobs lined up for after graduation by the time they began recruitment activities. As a result, the partnership needed to adjust their recruitment timeline.

Veteran Recruitment

At least two partnerships encountered obstacles when recruiting veterans, their intended target population. Veterans were found to be a difficult-to-reach population, as many did not attend advertised veteran-specific events. Veterans often had family and part-time job responsibilities, so scheduling was challenging. The Aquaculture Training Partnership, in addition, realized that it needed to receive approval from the Department of Veterans Affairs to become a listed recognized trainer. This was important to ensure that the veterans received access to certain VA benefits. This is an important consideration for future grantees wishing to recruit veterans.

Incumbent Worker Recruitment

Incumbent worker programs faced unique challenges due to the scheduling constraints of incumbent workers and their employers. A number of incumbent worker programs encountered obstacles to recruiting due to the workload of currently employed individuals. Individuals working full time with family or other commitments outside of work often were reluctant or unable to add more hours to their already busy schedules. Other incumbent worker programs needed employers to allow workers to take time off during normal work hours, which would lead incumbent workers to potentially lose wages during participation or have to make up work at other times. All around, these issues prevented many incumbent workers from taking part in programming. Particularly when there was not a guarantee of an increased wage or other meaningful benefit on the other side, convincing employed individuals to invest in additional training was challenging.

Furthermore, incumbent worker programs found it difficult to convince incumbent workers of the mismatch between industry needs and their current skills. Particularly for individuals in successful careers, being told they lack skills and are in need of supplemental training was not welcomed by potential participants.

For incumbent worker training programs, the best recruitment comes through employers that can refer workers for additional training so that they can move up a career ladder. However, several partnerships found that employers in the sector did not fully understand or embrace the training and as a result were not effective recruiters.

Several programs faced a lack of interest among incumbent workers in moving "up the ladder" within a sector. DLT should consider evaluating the extent to which there are incentives for workers to actually increase their training and take a higher status job before funding future incumbent worker training programs. In many workplaces in the current economy, moving from a one position to the next position up the line (for example, floor worker to manager) comes with only a minor increase in pay. To the extent to which workers have to complete extensive training and take on many new responsibilities, minor pay increases may not be sufficient to motivate workers to pursue these paths. It would be helpful to have grant applicants be clearer about the financial benefits for workers who gain training and receive promotions both for DLTs consideration of the likelihood of success of the program but also so the grantee can make that information clear in recruitment.

Successful Recruitment Strategies

Twelve out of twenty six partnerships met or exceeded their recruitment goals. Partnerships pointed to specific practices that they saw as essential to their success.

Social Media and "Free" Media

Good advertising practices were essential to recruiting interested qualified candidates. Many grantees made use of social media, which allowed them to attract recruits at little cost and reach people who might be particularly interested in the training because they were visiting sites that were linked with interests in the field.

One partnership used a jobs website for recruitment and, while it was not a successful strategy to use the website for recruitment alone, pairing it along with a social media strategy may have improved its utility as a recruitment tool.

Particularly beneficial to some grantees was the use of news coverage of the industry or program to spread the word about the program. The DLT and the administration were helpful in these endeavors by holding press conferences and other events that would raise awareness through the media about the availability of programming. For example, Electric Boat, which ran the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, received widespread media attention after it signed a new defense contract and the administration and the company issued press releases and conferences to announce the news.

Career Days, Trade Shows, and Industry Networking Events

A number of grantees made use of specific events in order to recruit participants and were very successful. Partnerships targeting youth for "greenhousing" initiatives found Career Days held at schools and regional Career Readiness Fairs to be a useful mechanism for identifying youth interested in programming. Some partnerships, for example, the Residential Construction Partnership, used trade shows to demonstrate projects and recruit qualified and interested candidates who had an interest in the type of work offered by the partnership. Some also utilized industry networking events where people with interest in the field would gather for either social or technical reasons. For example, the Partnership for Real IT Jobs maintained a presence at industry networking events where people got together to code. Utilizing these events where people with a personal interest in the subject gathered proved to be very useful for identifying "good fit" recruits.

Connections with Educational Entities and Employer Partners

Many partnerships were able to leverage their relationships with community organizations and educational partners to recruit participants. The RJRI Cybersecurity Partnership was one such example. It hired a dedicated education outreach coordinator to connect with liaisons at colleges and universities. The partnership was able to work closely with educational institutions to establish a pipeline of potential recruits who could be guided towards the program. Several different partnerships were aided in their recruitment efforts by career and technical high schools. The Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, for example, was able to utilize career and technical institutes in forming an outreach campaign to students. This helped them with recruiting at little cost.

Employers served as great recruiters for several partnerships, particularly incumbent worker training programs. For example, the Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership was able to engage and recruit from a large variety of employer partners from different sectors. As a result of its activities, RIFMTP exceeded its initial recruitment goal.

Working with an Established Community Organization with Ties to the Community
Partnerships that were specifically aimed at recruiting new or more diverse populations than traditionally filled the field found that engagement with a community organization that was well established in serving the target populations helped build trust and aid recruitment within the target communities. A particularly good example of a successful partnership for expanding recruitment to a new, diverse population was the Urban Apprenticeship Program's alliance with Progreso Latino, which enabled the partnership to reach a target population that they had not reached before.

Other Recruitment Strategies
Utilizing diverse recruitment methods proved important. Several other factors were found to be contributors to successful recruitment. Simple word of mouth and cultivating a positive reputation aided a number of grantees in recruitment efforts. The Manufacturing Bootcamp found that by creating high quality training and producing high quality graduates, it could attract additional partners who proved valuable for program recruitment and expansion.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices for recruitment and outreach emerged.

- Incorporate or develop a standardized assessment to screen potential recruits for interest and fit in the program.
- Hire a recruitment coordinator to execute recruitment and outreach activities.
- Partner with a variety of community organizations with ties to the target community and consider partnering with innovative or outside the box groups that might have access to a hard-to-reach target population.
- Create a clear and effective "sales statement" about the program to communicate why people should participate in it.
- Attend multiple and varied events throughout the community.
- Hold consistent regular meetings to keep community partners and employers engaged in recruitment and outreach efforts.
- Advertise in a way that challenges pre-existing conceptions of the industry.
- When employing "greenhousing" strategies at universities and high schools, connect training modules to courses offered through the normal curriculum or major.
- Engage all partners in a discussion to identify the best times and locations for recruitment activities.

Specifically for incumbent worker trainings:

- Continually expand the number of employers involved to increase and continue recruitment.

- Focus on discussing training programs as "strengths based" training needs instead of focusing on the skill deficits of workers.
- Engage employers to make sure they see the program as beneficial and understand their role in referring workers.
- Identify or create networking events for the industry so that current employees can congregate and receive information about the training program.

Recommendations

The Real Jobs Rhode Island Program focused on creating "industry-led partnerships to advance the skills of the State's workforce, grow the State's economy and increase sustainable employment for working families." Successful recruitment and outreach is essential to the success of the RJRI mission. The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure success in recruitment and outreach of RJRI programming.

- Before approving a plan to recruit from a specific target group, make sure the grantee has taken the necessary steps to ensure success. Including a community organization with well-established connections to the target community (whether veterans or communities of color) is a good way to ensure that the recruitment will be successful both in terms of the formal steps that need to be taken to recruit that population and to ensure trust with the population.
- Require grant applications to include a section on how the grantee plans to recruit, what obstacles they expect to encounter, and how they plan to succeed in light of these obstacles.
- Encourage grantees to utilize "outside the box" strategies for recruitment of underemployed individuals, such as recruiting from places of recreation that may indicate an interest in the field.
- To the extent possible, facilitate partnerships in creating a standardized assessment to screen potential recruits for interest and fit in the program.
- Encourage more grantees to implement a "greenhousing" strategy to reach soon-to-be-graduates instead of relying exclusively on unemployed workers.
- Help partnerships identify community partners that may be able to help with the recruitment of the target population.
- Require grant applicants to specify the financial benefits of incumbent worker trainings to employees.

Section 7: Programming

In this section, we examine the methods by which grantees executed and implemented their programs under RJRI. Efficient and constructive implementation is essential to building budding sectors and sustaining and growing established ones. Many grantees used a holistic, multidimensional method of implementation, encompassing several different aspects of the industry and different target populations to grow or stabilize their workforce pipeline. We also examine the challenges and successful strategies for effectively implementing the partnerships' proposed content. Overall, RJRI partners successfully trained 920 participants. Of those successfully recruited into training, 81.2 percent completed training. One of the key aspects of RJRI that helped to increase the rate of success was that partnerships could amend their trainings through an ongoing improvement process. This flexibility was a large benefit to the partnerships and allowed them to learn from challenges and adopt effective practices to overcome them. Partnerships reported many positive outcomes from their programs, most notably that employer partners valued the programs and benefited from them and that many training programs led to employment and advancement opportunities for participants.

New Worker Programs

Training Types & Methods

New worker programs are essential for reducing unemployment and filling gaps in the workforce. Grantees implemented a total of 21 new worker programs. Such programs often must account for both specialized and basic skills. Program length generally fell into three categories: single or half day, multi-day, and multi-week programs. The majority were several (2-5) day programs or multi-week programs. Two were semester-long programs held at local higher education institutions.

More than half of all new worker programs implemented some form of testing or evaluation for potential candidates. The most common evaluations were basic language, reading, and math. A number of programs provided remedial education to those participants whose skills needed improving or incorporated it into training. One program executed an orientation session to teach potential candidates about the sector.

Two partnerships utilized "bootcamp" models of training new workers. Bootcamps involved accelerated training and building skills from the ground up, beginning with the basics.

Mentorship was incorporated into several new worker training programs. Mentors were experienced personnel who provided training and counseling to new employees or students. The Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program extensively and successfully utilized mentoring to train new workers. In contrast, the Healthy Jobs RI Program found it difficult to implement a mentorship program due to issues with identifying a reimbursement mechanism and concerns about responsibilities and roles between the mentors and mentees.

Eight programs—four each—utilized either an apprenticeship or internship model for new employees. Apprenticeships comprised several methods of learning and instruction, including traditional instruction and on-the-job training.[39] Internships also were meant to provide participants with experience and knowledge about sectors or careers. For example, the Pipeline

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[39] For more information on apprenticeships, see United States Department of Labor. *Apprenticeship*. June 16, 2017. https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/training/apprenticeship.

to Manufacturing Careers in Shipbuilding Partnership worked to create an internship-to-employee pipeline. The partners hoped that their internship program would increase exposure of their industry to high school students and subsequently increase the number of people entering that industry.

At least four new worker programs incorporated other types of on-the-job training. On-the-job training allows for participants to train and learn as they perform the job. This type of training also can include elements of mentoring or classroom instruction, as was the case with the Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program. As well, it can provide hands-on experience that is gained through limited exposure to employers. For example, the RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative matched and placed participants with employer partners after participants completed the training modules. Participants performed various hands-on training exercises and took part in factory tours and other real-life work experiences. Participants received monthly coaching to ensure that they were meeting employer needs and expectations. This portion of the program allowed employers to familiarize themselves with participants before full employment.

Only two partnerships utilized online trainings, though many discussed adding online components in the future. Many grantees developed a la carte models of training. This allowed employers to choose or specify the training needed specifically for their workplace; it also allowed the partnerships to execute only what was needed and cut out unnecessary elements, which decreased the amount of time recruits would spend in training programs the employer did not require.

Many grantees conducted "greenhousing" efforts, which tried to increase exposure to the field among youth still in school. This approach is a way to develop a long-term pipeline of workers. Five grantees implemented some form of training or pipeline development that focused on youth. Youth populations included traditional and career and technical (CTE) high school students. For example, the Design Forward Partnership held a six-week-long program for 14-18-year-old students to increase their exposure to the design sector and improve their design skills, whereas the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership worked with the Rhode Island Department of Education to expand training opportunities at CTE schools to introduce Rhode Island's youth to the opportunities related to shipbuilding and the manufacturing trades. This meant bringing its education partners together to develop and deliver a curriculum modeled on the National Marine Education Council's national marine curriculum to high school students.

Facilitating Training Participation and Completion for New Workers

Many new worker programs attempted to provide additional supports for participants of their programs. The most common support method was providing a stipend or pay to trainees. The CNA Talent Network Partnership, for example, provided a stipend of $375.00 to participants who successfully completed the 30-hour internship, whereas Electric Boat, the lead employer in the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, hired 75 percent of trainees before the start of training. This ensured that the majority of program participants received training-related employment after training completion and were able to afford to and were motivated to complete the training. Decreasing or eliminating program costs, including paying for some or all of the cost of training materials, training courses, and license and test fees, also was common. Transportation was an issue for many program participants, so a number of grants arranged carpools or bus passes and helped participants identify reliable forms of transportation.

Several grants implemented a similar tactic when dealing with the issue of childcare. They worked with participants to identify childcare services or resources to assist with this problem. For example, the Healthy Jobs RI program provided on-site child care services for program participants. A few grantees provided assistance with job placement when programs did not result directly in employment.

Figure 7.1: Services Provided for New Worker Trainings
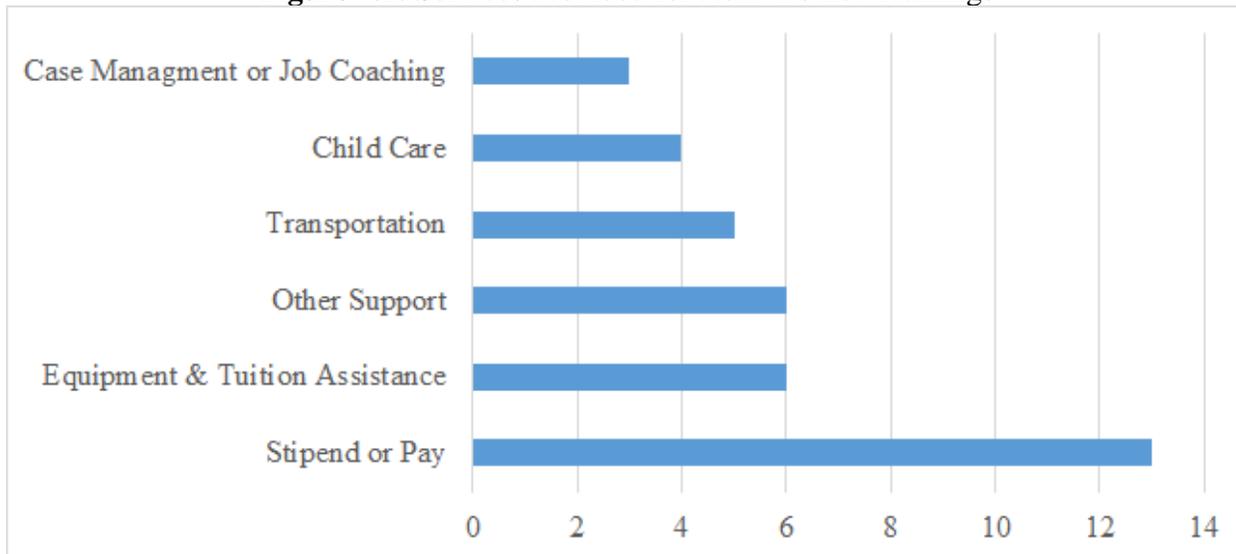
Incumbent Worker Programs

Training Types & Methods
 Fifteen partnerships provided training for incumbent workers. Multi-week programs were most popular, followed by short term, then multi-day programs. In most cases, employers referred incumbent workers. Pre-assessment of program recruits was performed primarily by employer supervisors to these training programs, but this was not true in all cases. In some instances, an intermediary offered programming and all incumbent workers in a sector without employer referral were welcome. For example, the MedTech Innovation Engine organized bi-monthly networking events to convene and recruit health and wellness entrepreneurs and businesses from all industries.
 Many incumbent worker programs included a mentorship component that drew on senior members of the industry. The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island was able to use participants' incumbent worker status to their advantage when recruiting for its mentorship program. Supervisors and human resource officers in partner companies were responsible for selecting mentor program participants. Supervisors, therefore, were able to select the best fit for potential participation.
 A la carte models and other forms of education for incumbent workers were utilized by six partnerships. The a la carte model in the case of the Food Management Training Collaborative allowed employers to request individual ManageFirst topics or other training programs that were most needed to benefit their business and employees.

Facilitating Training Participation and Completion for Incumbent Workers

Fewer supports were included to facilitate participation by incumbent workers. Some programs provided equipment and tuition assistance. Reimbursement of training costs was utilized by at least three incumbent programs. One example is the model utilized by the Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership (CTSUP), which charged a tuition fee of $750 for participation but organized incentives to make the training program accessible to those who could not afford tuition. Working with partner organizations, CTSUP offered conditional, partial tuition reimbursements to participants contingent on the participant's regular participation and completion of training milestones.

Case management was offered by the Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership to assist participants who struggled in training programs. Participants received help identifying and developing solutions to their challenges.

Figure 7.2: Supports for Incumbent Worker Trainings

Locations

Partnerships used a variety of locations to hold trainings or other activities. The most common locations for new and incumbent worker programs were local colleges, universities, and public schools. URI and CCRI were the most commonly utilized institutions of higher learning, although almost all of the universities and colleges in the state participated in at least one program. Career and technical education schools were involved in five partnerships. The second most common location was employers/businesses, often for on-the-job or in-house training. Two programs employed field work, in which trainees would gain training or experience through off-site participation that was neither an employer nor a school. For example, the Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program had participants help out/volunteer at one of the free clinics. Participants gained experience and the clinic received needed help. One program, the Building Futures Partnership, made use of a local union training facility.

Figure 7.3: Training Locations for New and Incumbent Worker Programs
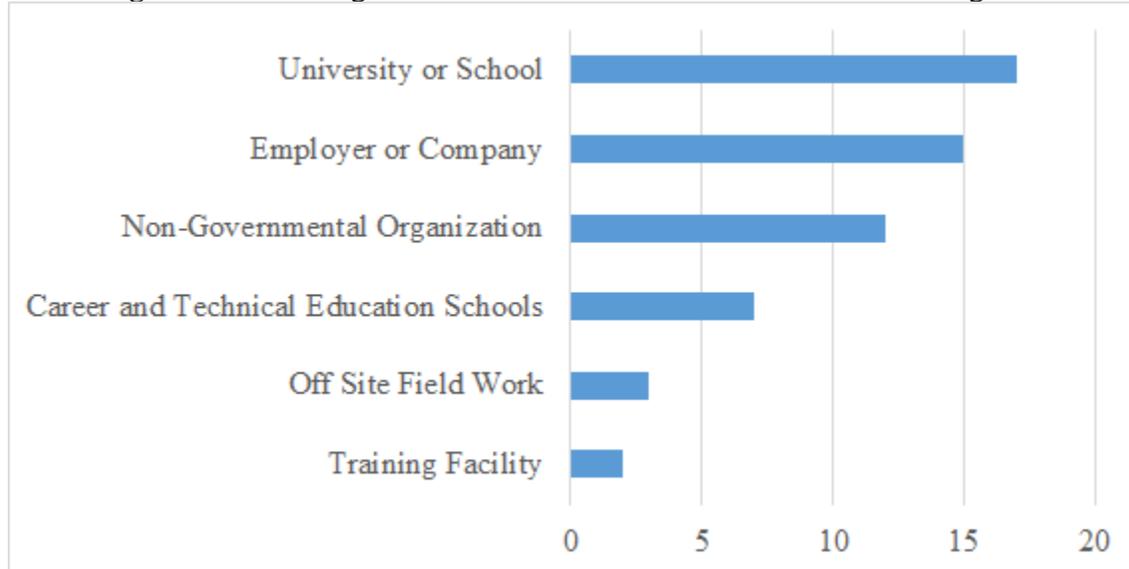
Sector Development Programs

Infrastructure

At least 11 grantees took steps to implement or develop sector-building programs. Several partnerships worked towards developing beneficial infrastructure for their sector. Two programs created websites, which included online resource databases or job banks. Two developed new educational infrastructure. This included, in the case of Healthy Jobs RI, developing a new accredited program at Rhode Island College and, in the case of the Medtech Innovation Engine, creating an expert council to gather and disseminate knowledge. Additionally, the Medtech Innovation Engine worked to identify and implement appropriate technology and tools for ecosystem participants to track participants and measure the impact of the program.

Counseling Services

Two partnerships developed new counseling and advising programs for their industry. The Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership created a Contract Support Center to help its graduates execute and grow their businesses, along with assisting graduates in navigating standard business practices. The Medtech Innovation Engine developed an early stage feasibility check program to help entrepreneurs evaluate the feasibility of their business ideas and comply with regulations.

Building Intermediary Capacity and New Member Recruitment

Several grantees continued to recruit new members or partners and build intermediary capacity into their implementation program. Recruitment of new members is essential for partnerships that wish to expand their services. For example, the Partnership for Real IT Jobs made use of a "Company Relations Manager" as part of its program to work with and recruit

new employer partners. Several partnerships worked to develop the capacity to act as liaisons or intermediaries for other organizations and services.

Expansion, Improvement, and Administrative

A number of grantees outlined concrete steps to expand and improve their services. Two partnerships planned to conduct surveys to track progress and receive and respond to feedback. One sector intermediary needed to be fully supported and stabilized in order to provide training opportunities and pipeline development for a critical sector of the economy. This partnership hired a new executive director and revamped its executive board. The organization then hired a full-time director of development to create new programs that would serve the needs of the industry, all with the financial support of the DLT while the partnership underwent necessary restructuring.

Programming Challenges and Successful Strategies

Program Content

Though many successes occurred, partnerships commonly experienced challenges while implementing new programs. In many cases, given the flexibility of RJRI, partnerships were able to modify their programming in response, but some challenges were more difficult to overcome. Three programs encountered program participants who unexpectedly lacked essential or critical skills. For example, the Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program learned that many of its pre-apprenticeship participants did not have experience managing personal finances, which the partnership saw as preventing their effective transition to the workforce. Therefore, the partnership built in a personal finance literacy training program as part of the pre-apprenticeship training. Other partnerships, such as the Aquaculture Training Partnership, found that certain certification tests required reading or math skills that participants lacked, so the partnership adjusted its programs to incorporate such skills into the training.

Three partnerships found that it was necessary to reorder their program content to address the needs of their trainees. For example, the CNA Talent Network learned that providing "essential skills" training at the beginning, rather than throughout the training, was more beneficial for the trainees, as many of the skills learned (such as the importance of being on time) were also skills needed to complete the training. Likewise, the Cybersecurity Partnership designed its training program on the basis of skills that were required for Department of Defense (DOD) employment, but after learning that DOD had changed its skill requirements, the partnership was able to work with the grant adviser to modify its training program quickly on the basis of this new information.

Finding the right training length and underestimating the effectiveness of training also proved problematic. Partnerships wanted trainees to be well prepared and trained, but it often took more time than anticipated to achieve the desired level of proficiency. For example, the Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program underestimated the amount of one-on-one mentorship that would be required for trainees and found the mentorship aspect to be the most beneficial. As a result, the partnership adjusted its programming to add more mentors and a process where each apprentice rotated through different mentors, depending on which skills they were building.

One of the goals of RJRI was to allow sectors to adjust quickly to rapidly changing needs of the industry. However, several partnerships noted that even with DLT support, it was challenging to adapt at the pace at which the industry was changing. For example, the Medtech Innovation Engine found that the changing trends within the medical technology and healthcare industries made it difficult to stay abreast of the latest industry developments, which in turn made it challenging to provide technical assistance for entrepreneurs and businesses working to develop new products and services.

Bureaucratic hurdles also presented a challenge to adopting new training protocols through institutions of higher education. Several partners found that working with colleges and universities was a challenge and that it was difficult to get recruits into higher education programs with eligibility criteria and to compensate trainees due to institutional rules. Further, attempts to adapt curricula to overcome these challenges could not occur in time for them to be used. Some grantees also found that the training curriculums provided by their education partners were inadequate. This was the case, for example, with the Design Forward Partnership, which struggled to work with an education partner to deliver a business education module.

Mentoring

Mentoring programs faced several specific challenges with regard to implementation. Finding qualified and willing mentors was a difficult task. This issue was exacerbated as the number of program recruits, and therefore mentors needed, increased. Compensation and oversight of mentors also were problematic. In one case, a partnership discovered that employers did not have mechanisms in place to provide compensation or the needed supervision of mentors, which made the program difficult to oversee.

Participation, Attendance, and Completion

Many grants faced challenges with trainee participation, attendance, and completion, though the cause of the issues often varied. Participants sometimes found the training sessions financially burdensome, leading to attendance issues. Personal issues that could not be overcome resulted in recruits dropping out. We discuss these issues in more depth in the trainee barriers section of the evaluation.

One challenge that sectors have not figured out how to overcome is how to recruit for highly technical fields, such as the insurance industry. Some grantees found that program participants were intimidated by the scope and depth of the training material and left the program or did not enroll because they did not feel confident in their ability to learn it. As many professions in the United States have become more technical and complicated, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine how to assess potential recruits for their ability and then ease them into training, so that those who do possess the potential to succeed do not leave because they feel overwhelmed by the material.

Successful completion of training programs also posed challenges for some partnerships. The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island found it difficult to ensure program completion due to a lack of buy-in/oversight from employer supervisors for on-the-job training programs. For some partnerships, this was due, in part, to the disruption that is caused on production lines when incumbent workers leave for training. Another program was forced to eliminate a planned training component when it could not reach agreement with employer partners on compensation issues.

One practice that many of the partnerships found useful in improving attendance and completion was compensating trainees and/or paying for training-related expenses. These monetary incentives generally consisted of stipends or payments to participants or payment of training-related expenses, such as assessments, tuition, fees, and uniforms. New worker trainees sometimes were paid during the internship component of the training (e.g., the Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership), or the training offered a paid pre-apprenticeship program (e.g., the Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program and the Marine and Composites Partnership). Some partnerships, such as the Aquaculture Training Partnership, provided a stipend to participants while in the training, while others, including the Building Futures Partnership, paid for travel and provided a daily allowance. For the CNA Talent Network, the partnership paid for assessments, tuition, and fees for training participants who otherwise would not have been able to take part or complete the training.

For incumbent trainings, one partnership, the Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative, paid for training costs and offered the training during work hours so that employees could continue to be paid through their employer while at the training, while another, the Phoenix Partnership, paid for incumbent workers to attend the training to ensure that the employees would receive their full compensation. Some partnerships made compensation dependent on the completion of their program, while others provided compensation throughout the duration of the training. Overall, these various methods of providing payments to training participants contributed to higher daily attendance and overall training completion rates. However, some partnerships were not able to provide monetary rewards. The Medtech Innovation Engine, for example, instead provided free use of its workspace and other resources for training participants.

Scheduling

Scheduling trainings at a time that worked for participants was a frequent obstacle for many partnerships. Some of this was due to issues like available child care, as discussed in the trainee challenges section, but many other issues also presented challenges to scheduling. Training programs had to both ensure that participants were adequately trained and do it in a timely manner. Some of the programs, as a result, required a more rigid schedule than often was necessary. Such rigid schedules presented problems for participants who had to miss even a single class. These participants fell behind and sometimes were unable to make-up these classes, leading them to drop out. A rigid schedule also limited on-demand enrollment. Potential recruits often would have to wait until the next training session began, which sometimes was up to several months away. Other partnerships underestimated the time required to complete programs and had failed to schedule enough time to complete all the components. Timing the completion of trainings also was an important factor for some industries. If trainees graduated in a slow season for the industry, participants did not acquire a job for many months, or by the time the industry was ready to hire, participants had already found work in other industries.

Programs that had youth components found that the school year schedule could impact the success of the program and that it was important to consider that when planning. The Residential Construction Partnership realized that its program worked best when it started at the beginning of the school year rather than in the middle. The Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership also had issues with scheduling. Its original Biz Camp for high school students was planned for the two school breaks (February and Spring); however, students either were not interested in committing during these breaks or had other responsibilities. As a result, only one Biz Camp program was held. However, in the next round, Westerly Regional adapted by

working with schools to offer its program during the school day. This partnership found that it could hold in-school Biz Camp sessions during the student advisory period. To date, this has been more successful, and enrollment numbers increased significantly after this iteration.

Scheduling challenges also affected incumbent programs. It was important for grantees to ensure that employer partners could handle reduced staff and accommodate their workers while they trained. The Phoenix Partnership had to delay the start of its training to accommodate its employer partners. Additionally, the Phoenix Partnership found it difficult to navigate the varied scheduling policies implemented by its employer partners. For example, some had employees work before training while others did not, and scheduling for lunch breaks also varied across employers. Again, however, the flexibility of programming under RJRI allowed several grants to adjust their programs to meet the scheduling needs of incumbent workers after learning of constraints.

Training Program Logistics & Administration

Finding the ideal training provider was a problem for two grantees. One, the Healthcare Training Collaborative, had difficulty finding experienced training providers, since it was working in an unfamiliar geographic location far from its previous provider.

Two partnerships found that the training facilities they were utilizing did not adequately meet their needs. The Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership utilized CTE schools to deliver the curriculum but found that they lacked the infrastructure and equipment necessary to achieve this task. The Healthcare Training Collaborative discovered that the location chosen to provide an in-depth clinical experience for the trainees did not have the right type of environment to do so. The partnership later resorted to its old location, but this caused transportation issues for some of the participants.

Tracking participants' training progress and program completion for administrative needs created a barrier for the Real Jobs of Northern Rhode Island Partnership. This partnership utilized a competency-based training model. It found that this model worked better for trainees and was more cost effective overall, but this made it difficult to track participants, as the administrative systems in place were designed to track a more traditionally scheduled time-based training model. However, the RJRI program was flexible and encouraged the partnership to continue its work.

While the flexibility of the program allowed many partnerships to succeed after adjusting their programs, there were also several successes worth noting that were best practices from the start. Many programs met or exceeded their initial goals. For example, the Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program had 219 people complete its initial application process. From this pool, the partnership was able to recruit the best candidates for its Pre-Apprenticeship training. In the end, several partnerships overshot their original training goal. Many grantees were similarly able to achieve high levels of completion and participation in their programs.

Other partnerships found that piloting their training prior to full implementation proved beneficial. The Healthy Jobs RI Partnership piloted its behavioral health training prior to rolling it out more broadly; this strategy allowed it to make modifications to the curriculum and the training plan.

Practicality and Value

Many partnerships noted that the training they designed and implemented was meeting the needs of their sector and appreciated by employer partners. For example, the Real Jobs

Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership felt it was able to provide valuable real-world experiences to its interns by having them market their ideas to business partners, and the Healthy Jobs Rhode Island Partnership felt that the training content and infrastructure it developed was valuable and would have continued usefulness for the healthcare sector.

Some partnerships were able to tailor their training toward specific industry needs that would depend on the particular employer, and therefore were able to help many different employer needs within the sector. The Food Management Training Collaborative exemplified the ability to adapt its training to industry and employer needs. Its "a la carte" training model allowed employers to flexibly send incumbent workers to individual trainings based on the specific skills needed for advancement at their workplace. It also was able to hold some trainings as webinars, further increasing the flexibility of the model.

Creation of new programs, curriculums, and infrastructure by grantees led to advances in several industries. The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island received feedback from its sector partners that the manufacturing industry was advanced as a whole because of the implementation and creation of its customized leadership training curriculum. The MedTech Innovation Engine was able to implement a program that engaged regional entrepreneurs and produced a pipeline of entrepreneurs to industry partners. Formerly, no such program existed to fulfill this need in the medical technology sector.

Preparation

Training and sector building programs can help facilitate training completion by struggling trainees. Some programs were able to develop methods to further increase the success of their participants. For example, one way programs did this was by encouraging students to form study groups. The CNA Talent Network created a culture of support and encouragement among students, which helped the participants succeed in the program.

Proper screening methods to identify the best recruits and those most likely to succeed were extremely helpful to several partnerships, and most programs implemented some form of screening. Internships and training programs encouraged transition into employment and allowed participants to hone their skills before advancing to employment interviews.

Several programs helped to created and facilitate certification programs. These certifications allowed participants to be recognized for their training as well as to increase their hireability. The Healthy Jobs Rhode Island Partnership, for example, helped to establish a Community Health Worker certification for the state.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices for program implementation emerged:

- Provide opportunities for the application of training skills in workplace settings through on-the-job training programs and opportunities.
- Focus on depth of training over the number of trainees.
  - Hire training instructors with industry and educational experience.
- Create a culture whereby training participants support one another.
- Include essential skills/soft skills training as part of the first module of the training program.

- Conduct trainings in-house to avoid the additional administrative steps required at a higher education institution when a full degree is not required.
- Provide compensation for training participants and workplace incentives for mentors.
- Utilize employer partners to design and implement the training curriculum.
- Develop training curricula that can be tailored to employer needs on an "a la carte" basis.
- Build in training components of basic academics as needed (such as ESL, math, soft skills, tutoring).
- Pilot training programs before full implementation to assess the strengths and weaknesses of programming.
- Adjust programming to overcome challenges on an ongoing basis.
- Solicit feedback from training graduates to continuously update and improve training programs.
- Conduct post-evaluations with supervisors to see if the training had the desired impact.
- Assess the order in which modules are offered and re-order training curricula to better align with trainee needs and their application when relevant.

Recommendations

Successful program implementation is essential to the success of Real Jobs Rhode Island's mission to create sustainable jobs and develop local industries. The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure the success of future training programs under RJRI.

- Continue to allow flexibility so that grantees can adapt as they go to overcome challenges, or, if grantees discover that part of their funded proposal is no longer needed, funding can be shifted to other training needs.
- Encourage partnerships to hold training programs aligned with the time of year the sector does most of its hiring for sectors with seasonal fluctuations.
- Encourage the use of online instruction where possible and encourage partnerships to add online components for modules or classes that participants could not attend in person or to help make up missed content.
- Continue to allow partnerships to provide training stipends or incentives to those in training programs (new workers and incumbent workers).
- Work with employers to have a plan in place to avoid disruptions to production when incumbent workers are attending training sessions.
- For incumbent trainings, encourage or require partnerships to conduct post-training evaluations related to workplace productivity.
- Suggest that partnerships hold incumbent worker trainings on-site if possible, and if held off-site, have partnerships identify a plan for expectations regarding incumbent workers returning to work.
- For new worker trainings, encourage partnerships to 1) implement a comprehensive recruitment strategy that includes screening methods for identifying those most likely to succeed and 2) include a portion of the training that enables participants to complete on-the-job training elements to help improve trainees' employability.
- In sectors that are struggling to design and implement training programs, support partnerships in working to identify best practices from other states that could be used to meet industry needs.

Section 8: Trainee Challenges

If the economy continues to grow, finding workers will likely become more difficult, and industries interested in growing their workforce will need to be able to tap into populations with traditionally higher numbers of un- and underemployed workers. These populations may have significant barriers to workforce participation that need to be addressed in order to support economic growth. The most common challenges for trainees identified by the partnerships involved transportation, child care, affording training, soft and basic skills, and finding scheduling times that work for trainees. Learning from the successes and challenges of the 2016 RJRI grantees can provide lessons for future grantees to plan for and succeed in developing their workforce under similar conditions.
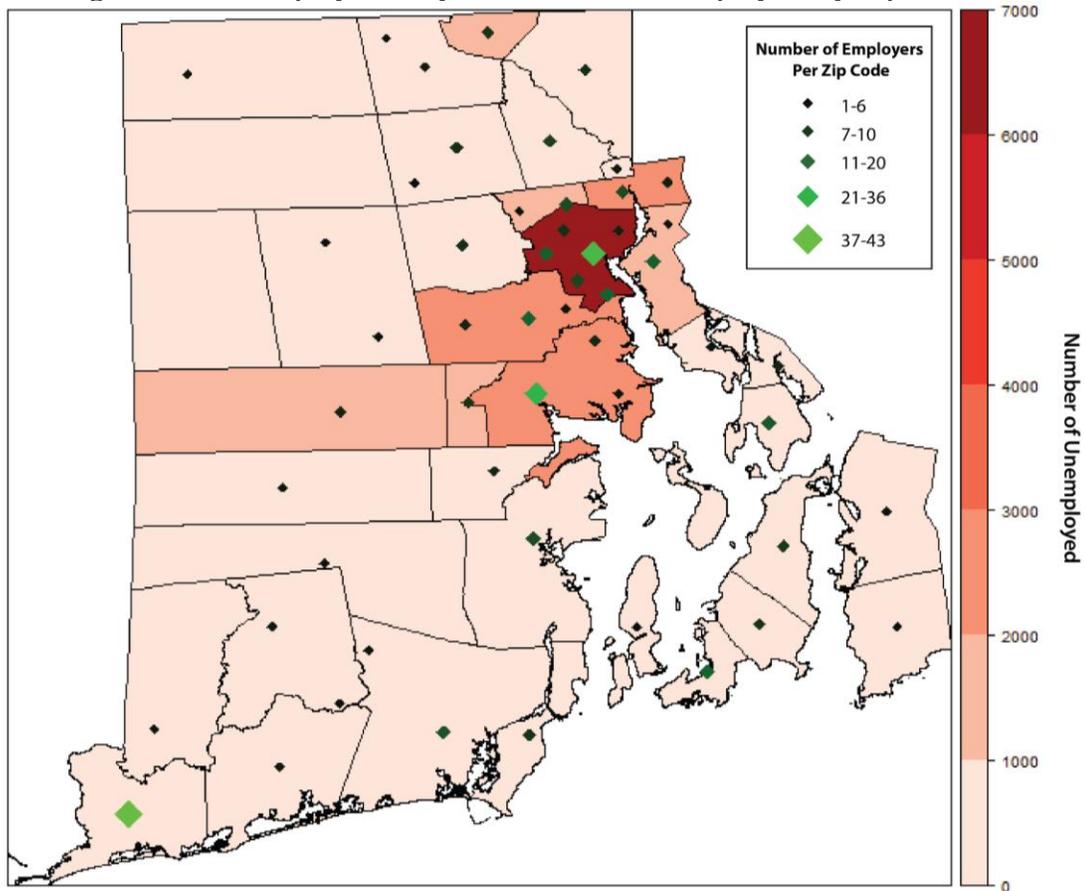
Transportation

Finding adequate transportation for employees and trainees was the most frequently encountered challenge reported by partnerships. What is known as the "spatial mismatch" exacerbated transportation issues for the partnerships and is likely to continue presenting a problem for partnerships in the future. The "spatial mismatch" refers to the misalignment of un- and underemployed populations, public transportation lines and availability of private transportation, and the location of job opportunities.[40] Figure 8.1 shows the cities with the largest unemployed populations compared with the location of RJRI employers. While employers are spread across the state, the vast majority of the unemployed population of Rhode Island is located in the urban core.

The issues relating to access to Quonset Point Business Park provide a good example of the spatial mismatch between the location of the un- and underemployed and employment locations in Rhode Island. The Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership and General Dynamics, one of the largest employers involved in RJRI, which plans to hire thousands of workers in the coming years, are located in the Quonset Point Business Park. Yet, there is no viable public transportation route to service the area, presenting a major barrier for the partnership and its trainees. To illustrate, consider a worker trying to commute from Pine Street in Providence (the location of OIC, a community-based organization with established ties to un- and underemployed populations in Providence) to Quonset Point. While this commute takes under half an hour by car, no public transportation route exists between these two locations. It takes an hour to ride RIPTA from Pine Street to the bus stop closest to Quonset Point, and from that stop, employees would need to walk for over an hour to complete the journey. If a shuttle between the bus stop and the actual employer locations could be established, it would be best if RIPTA also coordinated bus lines from Providence to align with the start and end times of shifts at Quonset Point businesses. Without additional attention to the inaccessibility of this location, there will likely continue to be considerable challenges to recruiting and retaining workers from the towns with the largest populations of un- and underemployed workers.

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[40] Gobillon, Laurent, Harris Selod, and Yves Zenou. "The mechanisms of spatial mismatch." *Urban studies* 44.12 (2007): 2401-2427.

Figure 8.1: Unemployment by Town and RJRI Employers by Zip Code

While the challenge of accessing Quonset Point exemplifies the spatial mismatch, this was not the only partnership to face transportation challenges. Transportation barriers were common among the grantees. At least 17 of the partnerships faced some degree of transportation challenge in carrying out their plans. Trainees had trouble with both affording and utilizing public transportation given the time and expense of riding RIPTA from their homes to distant training and employer locations. In many cases, cars are required to access these locations given the limitations of the state's public transit system. As a result, transportation issues were rooted in a number of obstacles, including but not limited to inaccessible public transportation, lacking driver's licenses, and the expense of owning and maintaining reliable vehicles while unemployed or in low paying jobs. As one partnership noted, it started screening recruits by asking, "When you get in your car, do you pray that it's going to start?"

Some partnerships found ways to overcome transportation barriers, at least during the period of training. Several grantees provided stipends that allowed trainees to offset the costs of transportation when training was located on an accessible RIPTA route or when they owned a car. Others successfully overcame transportation issues by working with community organizations, such as Progreso Latino, Man Up, Inc., or the Education Exchange. In these instances, case managers worked directly with trainees to provide transportation assistance ranging from providing bus passes, to assistance obtaining a driver's license, to providing a van or other means of transport to groups of trainees in inaccessible locations. Staff at Man Up, Inc., for example, utilized their connections with the judicial and legal systems to help trainees from

multiple cities regain or obtain their driver's licenses. However, for partnerships that provided bus passes or vans, the trainees then needed help accessing employer locations after they had transitioned from training to employment.

Many partnerships did not anticipate the magnitude of transportation challenges trainees faced, which limited their ability to retain trainees who could not reach training locations. Several partnerships noted that recruits who were otherwise a good fit were prevented from entering the field due to transportation barriers.

Importantly, transportation was a challenge that was faced by both incumbent and new workers. The RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative and several others found that being accessible by public transportation made travel easier for participants even if they did not have access to personal transportation. Unfortunately, convenience of location is not always a reality for all partnerships and so, given the magnitude of this challenge, planning for limiting transportation barriers and accommodating transportation needs should be considered in any future training proposal. In addition, providing temporary transportation support once trainees exit training and are employed would limit this transition challenge for trainees who become employed.

Childcare

Finding short and long-term childcare as well as childcare in "off hours" when trainings were often held, such as weekends and evenings, presented a significant challenge to both partnerships and trainees. This issue is exacerbated by the amount of childcare available in Rhode Island and the high cost of it, which often outpaces wages for low income workers.

In the past decade, the cost of childcare in Rhode Island has increased dramatically, while the availability and accessibility of licensed caretakers has decreased. In 2006, the average weekly rate of childcare facilities was $127.92[41]. By 2015, this cost rose by over 18 percent to $151.04.[42] Meanwhile, household income in Rhode Island has stagnated. For individuals making $30,000 a year (well above the federal poverty line), at this rate child care can consume up to 33 percent of an individual's bi-weekly take home pay. In addition, the number of licensed childcare centers has decreased by 53 percent during that same period (from 1,812 to 971).[43]

However, childcare issues go beyond affordability. Partnerships seeking to accommodate childcare needs of trainees learned that facilities with openings required a long-term contract for permanent childcare positions and/or had long waiting lists. Many facilities have maximum hour restrictions, limiting the ability of those who currently are enrolled in childcare to utilize them for additional training outside of work. In addition, the number of daycare facilities offering weekend and evening services is very small. In 2015, only 2.2 percent of the childcare facilities statewide operated on Saturdays, and only 1.4 percent of facilities operated on Sundays.[44]

Nine partnerships sought to lower the barrier of childcare by utilizing alternative childcare arrangements or by providing childcare services onsite. Some provided childcare services for evenings or weekends when trainings were offered, while others worked with a community organization to provide these services. The Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship

[41] Bodah, Matthew M. *Statewide Survey of Child Rates in Rhode Island.* 2006. p.15.
[42] Ibid, 16.
[43] Ibid, 3.
[44] Ibid, 9.

Program addressed this problem with the help of Progreso Latino, which has extensive experience dealing with similar issues and arranged daycare or reimbursement for participants needing those services. The Healthy Jobs Rhode Island Partnership provided onsite services by partnering with the Central Falls Parent College to offer daycare and tutoring for children while parents participated in training.

Future programs should include plans for coordinating with community groups to lower the barrier of childcare by providing onsite care or stipends to help with informal childcare. For partnerships training incumbent workers, training activities held during normal working hours increase the likelihood that childcare is addressed already and will not pose an obstacle to participation.

Training Affordability and Payment

Programs that paid a stipend or hourly rate to trainees in new worker programs not only were more likely to come closer to reaching their recruitment goals (as discussed in the recruitment and outreach section), but they also had more of their recruits complete training. In unpaid training programs, 68.1 percent of trainees who started the program completed it, but for paid programs, 76.4 percent of trainees completed their training. This is likely due to the fact that un- and underemployed workers often are not able to pay for extra expenses associated with participating in a training program or forego other wages in order to participate. Many people generate necessary income through informal means such as watching other people's children or helping out in other ways in order to make financial ends meet. While training programs are designed with long-term employment and economic stability in mind, trainees must nevertheless meet basic living costs while in training; as a result, paying or including a stipend for trainees during their time in training can improve the likelihood that interested and good fit workers can participate.

Figure 8.2: Training Completion Rates for Paid and Unpaid New Worker Training Programs
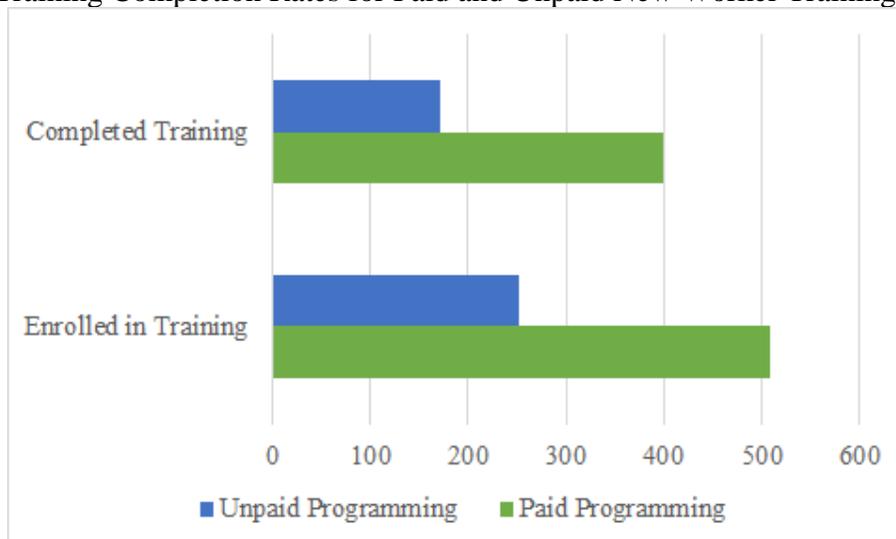
It was also a best practice to pay stipends to youth for participating in training programs. Partnerships noted that youth program recruitment and retention increased when payments were made. Many young people work to help support their families or may be tempted to draw income

through illicit sources or short-term jobs. Having financial incentives in place allowed youths to participate in the training program instead. Employment also lowers the likelihood that youths become involved in illicit activities and violence and, thus, to the extent that training programs provide financial incentives, they appear well worth the cost.[45]

Several partnerships found that providing stipends was money well spent, particularly for youths from economically-challenged families. For example, the Design Forward Partnership found that a stipend expanded its recruitment base and its completion rate. The partnership provided a $625 stipend over the course of a six-week program to young participants that offset summer employment needs.[46] While the stipend proved sufficient in the case of this program, making stipends equal to or greater than minimum wage may also be worthwhile to attract youths who otherwise need income to support themselves and their families during the summer.

Having a paid collegiate internship program while working with college students also creates secure recruitment pipelines for industries like cybersecurity that draw from a diverse student body. Recruiting interested students prior to the completion of training helped minimize gaps within pipelines. Similarly, recruitment was stabilized by having a paid collegiate internship program because industries do not rely on awareness programs or on working with under- or unemployed individuals to raise them to the level of education and ability required to work in the industry. Having a paid internship also provides opportunities to gain experience in the industry for economically disadvantaged students who need to pay for their education, which can prevent participation in internships and similar unpaid opportunities. The Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership, for example, provided a stipend that translated into an estimated $125 per week. Due to the stipend, students were able to supplement their incomes or reduce their work hours elsewhere to make time for the internship program.

Finally, incumbent workers faced potentially lost wages while participating in training that caused them to miss work. Paid incumbent training programs or agreements with employers to not count training as unpaid time off can be a good tool to offset this cost of participation. However, training programs that paid incumbent workers did not have higher completion rates among those enrolled in training compared with programs that did not pay trainees.

Other costs include necessary equipment and tuition in addition to the potential lost income associated with training participation. Seven grants at least partially, if not in full, covered costs associated with equipment or tuition needed to participate successfully in the training. This proved to be a best practice. For example, the Aquaculture Training Partnership provided equipment, specialized tools, and gear that trainees needed. Future grantees should follow this best practice and include essential equipment in their budgets, as the expense of purchasing gear may dissuade those who cannot afford the gear from participating.

Finally, decreasing or eliminating the cost of the training was seen as a meaningful way to increase involvement among good employees who could not afford tuition. The Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership offered incentives to training program participants, which helped them offset the cost of taking part in the program. Offering similar incentives in other industries will allow these programs to recruit participants who otherwise might not be able to afford the costs associated with the programs. With additional RJRI funding, the costs of tuition can be covered, removing a barrier that keeps individuals who cannot afford it from participating.

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[45] Heller, Sara B. "Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth." *Science*. 346, no. 6214. 2014. p.1219.
[46] Participants attended the program for 20 hours a week, which means each participant earned approximately $5.21 an hour.

Pre-clearance Issues

Seven partnerships struggled with obtaining preclearance documents and accomplishing screenings such as background checks, health screenings, credit checks, and driver's licenses for training participants. For many other partnerships, the problem was pre-clearance timing. Pre-clearance issues need to be overcome earlier in the training period than they were among some of the partnerships. For example, the Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership discovered that strict requirements were in place for defense industry employment. Recently, the national timeline for approving basic security clearance was extended from approximately one month to anywhere from six to nine months. As a result, training participants faced long gaps between the time they were interviewed and hired and the date that employment began. Further, in order to meet security clearance standards, participants required U.S. citizenship and no criminal record. These requirements limited the number of recruits participating in cybersecurity employment. This issue was addressed by asking that trainees apply for security clearances at the front end of their internship program rather than toward its conclusion, a best practice other partnerships should adopt.

Some of the preclearance issues were generated from misalignment between the target population and the clearance requirements needed for employment in the industry. For example, NRI did not anticipate that employees of the financial and banking industry required good credit histories in order to obtain jobs. This rendered most of its recruits ineligible for these employment positions. Thus, the NRI Partnership learned to ask for credit reports before training so that it could prevent individuals with poor credit histories from spending time in a training program that would not lead to employment. It also changed its target population to increase the likelihood of recruits passing these checks. Partnerships in the future should conduct necessary pre-clearance verification before training begins, at the very least, to ensure that participants are employable in the field and to shorten the time spent finding employment after training.

In addition, it is important to carefully identify the match between the recruitment target population and the clearance items needed. For example, partnerships targeting the unemployed but nevertheless requiring a good credit history are likely to experience challenges due to the often difficult credit histories of those who are unemployed.

However, it is also important for the DLT to consider pursuing legislation or working with employers to limit the use of credit histories and background checks for employment. Studies have shown credit checks can both unfairly limit the ability of minorities to participate in these fields due to predatory lending practices that tend to affect minority communities disproportionately[47] as well as create a "financial death spiral" for the unemployed: when people lose their jobs or have a period of underemployment, they often go into debt and receive a hit to their credit rating. Thus, such individuals are subject to a "Catch-22": they cannot establish their credit without a job, but they are prevented from getting a job due to their credit history.[48]

DLT also should make employers aware of the challenges of specific clearances. For example, a background check is a common preclearance that employers use to weed out applicants. While criminal background checks are used to help employers reduce a number of

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[47] US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Statement of Chi Chi Wu, Esq. National Consumer Law Center*. Meeting of October 20, 2010 - Employer Use of Credit History as a Screening Tool. https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/meetings/10-20-10/wu.cfm#fn6

[48] Glater, Johnathan D. "Another Hurdle for the Jobless: Credit Inquiries." *New York Times.* August 6, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/07/business/07credit.html?pagewanted=all

unwanted outcomes from hiring including legal liability, risk of theft, and other threats to workplace and public safety, flaws in the criminal background check process are known to undermine their value and accuracy as well as prevent suitable job candidates from securing employment. As a result, employers may limit their candidate pool unnecessarily, and people posing no risk to the public may be unnecessarily barred from employment.[49] Given the societal consequences of allowing people to remain unemployed after incarceration, DLT would be well-served to help employers determine whether background checks are achieving their desired results or if they could be refined to include only those who pose a risk to the public. For example, The Aquaculture Training Partnership (ATP) employed criminal background checks only to screen for specific crimes like theft, which was a longstanding problem in the aquaculture industry. This allowed the ATP to screen for crimes specific to industry concerns without excluding potential employees based on minor or inapplicable infractions. The ATP used this method primarily as a method to encourage self-reporting, however, and only ran background checks on a small number of participants.

It also may be useful for some grantees to consider a "green housing" initiative targeting high school or college students. Fields requiring background checks and health screenings may especially benefit from this strategy. Youths are less likely to have encountered situations that prevent a successful clearance than adults who have been under- or unemployed for a considerable period. While this is true across the board, it is particularly the case for security, health, and financial clearances. On this negative side, this approach would limit the ability to put currently un-and underemployed people back to work, while on the positive side, it could prevent future generations from becoming un- or underemployed.

Soft Skills

The fact that many recruits lacked soft skills and "essential skills" was another major obstacle to successful completion of the training and integration into the workforce. While this obstacle was particularly prevalent among youth, even skilled and experienced workers struggled. Many lacked soft skills, especially regarding attendance, social media, and technology use. Appropriate cell phone use was identified as a major obstacle by grantees. Several industry partners noted that incumbent workers and new workers alike do not use cell phones appropriately and lack other "soft skills," which reduces productivity and affects an employer's bottom line. For example, one partner noted, "I was at a job site yesterday... for twenty minutes. There wasn't a minute I walked by one of those three guys that they weren't on their phone. It's an issue. It's a big issue." Using training modules that incorporate the testimonials of industry professionals about appropriate conduct, technology use, and other topics relating to soft skills may benefit both trainees and the productivity of the entire sector.

It is also likely that cell phones will be incorporated into the everyday practices of industries, and so it will be important for training participants to learn what acceptable uses of technology on the job are. A soft skills training curriculum incorporating these topics may, therefore, benefit both training participants and grantees. A standardized online training or in-person training delivered by a single entity would allow partnerships to streamline the delivery of this training.

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[49] Denver, Megan, Garima Siwach, and Shawn D. Bushway. A New Look at The Employment and Recidivism Relationship Through the Lens of a Criminal Background Check. *Criminology* 55, no. 1. 2017 p. 174-204.

The timing of soft skill training also is important. Having essential skills and soft skills training early on allows trainees to have and practice these skills prior to the start of their training or internship. This would allow them to practice the skills during training and gain experience and comfort with the skills before starting employment.

Providing ESL, math, English, communication, and writing practice to help trainees shore up their skills and be ready for participation may be necessary for some fields. The Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program, for example, found that many applicants interested in the pipefitting industry lacked English proficiency. The partnership plans to implement a stronger ESL program to help future applicants.

Case Management

Trainees coming from disadvantaged populations or having been out of work for a long time often face unforeseen challenges. Several grantees found that having case managers, funded by the DLT, who helped trainees succeed in training and after transitioning to the workforce was essential to the success of their program. Case managers should work closely with training instructors to identify needed supports and ensure that participant's transition to the workforce. As the economy grows and employers begin recruiting workers from underserved populations, case management is likely to be essential to help these workers be successful. In cases where recruits drop out, partnerships would be well served by performing focus groups of these individuals to identify why they choose not to complete the program to make sure it was due to "bad fit" and not case management or other supports (such as transportation or childcare) that could have been provided.

Scheduling

Thirteen partnerships struggled with scheduling and determining how to handle missed training sessions. Alternative scheduling techniques could include moving training modules online or allowing a specific number of make-up sessions online. Moving some modules online or holding makeups online would allow incumbent or already-employed workers flexibility with family commitments that may otherwise limit their availability for additional training. Partnerships may need to work closely with educational partners when trying to improve training flexibility. For example, the CNA Talent Network Partnership, which partnered with CCRI, became frustrated and felt that CCRI's policies were too inflexible and not designed to facilitate success among their target population. The Partnership found CCRI's absentee policy particularly cumbersome. If participants encountered childcare or other issues that prevented attendance, no mechanism existed at CCRI to allow them to make up the classes.

Incumbent workers and workers with other jobs often had many time constraints. Partnerships targeting these groups found it useful to find the optimal time, place, and day for holding trainings by surveying participants.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, the following best practices for recruitment and outreach emerged:

- Provide support for transportation, including offering bus passes and/or shuttles and helping to gain or reinstate driver's licenses.
- Provide stipends or wages to training participants, interns, and apprentices to offset the costs of participation, transportation, childcare, and meeting basic needs.
- Provide gear or supplies needed for successful program completion at no cost.
- Provide onsite childcare as much as possible, and provide assistance with childcare when it is not possible to offer it onsite.
- Reduce or eliminate the costs associated with assessment, tuition and related fees, licensing, and other participation-related expenses.
- Provide remediation in math or language instruction as needed by the industry.
- Provide wrap-around services with social service agencies and/or community organizations to help trainees complete training and effectively enter the workforce.
- Work with employer partners to allow incumbent workers out of work for training purposes and provide training during work hours so that employees can continue to be paid through their employer while in a training program.
- Conduct pre-screening before training begins to ensure participants are employable in the sector before participating in a training program.

Recommendations

The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure trainee success in RJRI programming.

- Ensure that grantees have a plan for addressing transportation and childcare obstacles.
- Engage RIPTA in developing transportation options to large employers and sector hubs that currently are not served by existing routes.
- Decrease or eliminate the cost of training programs as much as possible to increase participation among those who cannot afford fees.
- Facilitate a discussion between institutions of higher education and businesses that rely on the workers produced in their training programs (e.g., CNA programs, cybersecurity programs, etc.) to ensure that the screening protocols for the institution make sense given the needs of the industry and are not overly cumbersome to potential recruits.
- Encourage partnerships to develop online options for eligible training modules to accommodate those who are unable to attend in person.
- Suggest that partnerships incorporate soft skills training into their training modules, particularly a module on proper technology and cell phone use.
- Work with employers to determine if pre-screening protocols are absolutely necessary to the industry or if they are posing a barrier to successful hiring and sector growth.

Section 9. Transition from Training to Employment

A central goal of the Real Jobs Rhode Island program was to create "sustainable employment" for workers through skills training.[50] This meant that many partnerships needed to focus on preparing participants for the transition from training to full-fledged industry employment, a process that was marked by both challenges and achievements. An examination of the challenges, achievements, and best practices of the transition from training to employment for new workers can serve as an effective tool for understanding and improving future iterations of the RJRI program.

The RJRI program allowed partnerships to emphasize one or more aspects of sector development, including training new workers, upskilling incumbent workers, and developing an industry workforce intermediary. This flexibility across grants meant that not all partnerships focused on training new workers: 19 of the 26 total partnerships focused on training new workers in the 2016 implementation period. Here we look at the challenges and achievements of those programs that aimed to place new hires with sector employers.

Of those 19, successful placement of trainees in training-related employment varied greatly, from 6 percent to 100 percent. Overall, at the time of this writing, 56 percent of those trained in the RJRI program in 2016 were employed in training-related jobs.

Figure 9.1: Number of Participants Successfully Trained, Target Number of Employed Participants, and Successfully Employed Participants
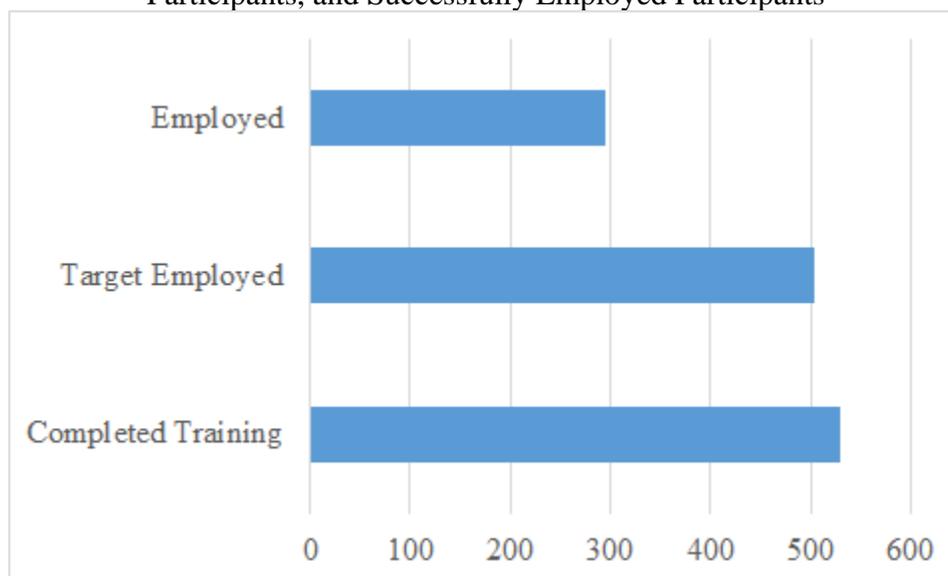
Challenges

Not all partnerships experienced challenges with the transition from training to employment. In fact, three of the 19 partnerships that trained new workers had no stated challenges with this transition during the 2016 implementation period. These partnerships all

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[50] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training: *Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals.* July 31, 2015. http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/ImpG/RJRIImpGrantSol0715.pdf

met, or came close to meeting, their stated goals for participant employment, and utilized many of the strategies and best practices described below. However, the remaining partnerships experienced challenges in transitioning their trainees from training to employment.[51]

Program design challenges

The challenges associated with overseeing the successful transition from training to employment for nine of the 19 RJRI partnerships that focused on training new workers were caused by the design of the partnership's program. A number of partnerships designed training programs that ended before industry employers began hiring new workers, leading to a gap of time between training and employment. This gap caused challenges for trained workers, who lacked a stable source of income and benefits for an indeterminate length of time while they waited for employment and for employers, since some trainees ended up choosing to work in other fields because positions were available immediately.

Other partnerships required prospective employers to pay a fee upon successful placement of workers in permanent positions. Prospective employers hesitated to pay this fee and, therefore, were reluctant to hire program graduates. Other partnerships trained workers and then later learned that trainees lacked a prerequisite required for industry employment. The training program was not designed to screen participants to ensure that these prerequisites were met and, consequently, several program graduates were not placed in employment. In other cases, partnerships did not ensure prior to training that industry organizations planned to hire program graduates in the short term, causing some trainees to enter a weak job market.

One partnership, the Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership, included an internship component in its training program to assist graduates in obtaining employment, but it did not mandate the completion of the internship and, consequently, participants who did not complete the internship struggled to find training-related employment.

At least two partnerships recruited workers with no prior experience in the partnership's industry but learned after the training that employers did not want to hire workers without prior industry work experience. This poses a problem for industries when workers cannot enter the industry without industry work experience and cannot get industry work experience without being hired into the industry. This was a challenge faced by the Insurance Innovation Partnership, for example, because the industry it served was unexpectedly reluctant to hire workers with no prior experience. The CNA Talent Network also experienced challenges with this issue. Some industry partners would not hire CNA trainees unless they had six months of experience in the healthcare industry, and not all participants had enough prior experience in the industry to meet this requirement.

Industry challenges

Eight partnerships experienced industry-related challenges while placing trainees in employment. Some partnerships trained workers for an industry that was not hiring new workers at the completion of training, or lacked the revenue to immediately hire a large number of similarly skilled workers. The Building Futures Partnership faced this challenge when the construction project that the partnership was specifically training its participants to work on ended earlier than expected. After this project ended, the partnership struggled to find other

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[51] Challenges were evaluated based on personal interviews conducted with partnership leaders and grant managers at the Department of Labor and Training. The challenges discussed in this section, therefore, reflect the information provided by the partnership and the DLT, and are not the result of analysis by the investigators.

large-scale construction projects that were looking to hire new workers. Other partnerships created training that did not meet the industry's needs, or taught skills that were not utilized in industry jobs. For example, the Rhode Island Manufacturing Growth Collaborative trained workers to fill basic entry level jobs, but after the training found that its industry was then seeking to hire technically trained workers in higher-skilled positions that required additional training or experience. The misalignment of training curriculum with industry needs made it difficult for trainees to find permanent work in the industry.

Some partnerships focused on training workers to acquire key industry licenses that enabled the workers to be hired within the industry, but then discovered the existence of a time gap that occurred after the completion of a licensure examination and the delivery of that license. This challenge was faced by the Healthcare Training Collaborative, which had planned to take advantage of the healthcare industry's temporary CNA licenses to get program graduates employed quickly at the end of training. However, at the completion of training, the partnerships learned that several industry partners were highly reluctant to hire workers with a temporary license.

Pre-clearance issues

As described in greater detail above in "Trainee Challenges," several partnerships struggled to help their trainees obtain pre-clearance documents and screenings such as background checks, health screenings, credit checks, and driver's licenses prior to the start of employment. For many other partnerships, it was an issue of pre-clearance timing. In these cases, trainees did not start the pre-clearance screening process necessary for employment in their industry until after the start of training. As a result, training participants faced long gaps between the time they were interviewed and hired and the date that employment began. Other partnerships struggled with misalignment between the target population and the clearance requirements needed for employment in the industry. For example, as discussed elsewhere, the Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island did not anticipate that employees of the financial and banking industry required good credit histories in order to obtain jobs. Because of this, the partnership recruited participants without checking their credit history. This resulted in trainees being unexpectedly ineligible for industry employment at the conclusion of training.

Participant challenges

The challenges associated with participants are discussed above in the Trainee Challenges section, but one partnership specifically faced acute participant-related challenges pertaining to the transition from training to employment. The Man-Up 2 Careers Partnership worked primarily with individuals exiting incarceration and re-entering society and the workforce. This population struggled to gain employment due to a variety of factors related to their lack of supportive families and social networks, their struggles adjusting to new living and employment environments, and recidivism, among other factors. These factors affected the ability of trainees to earn and maintain sustainable employment in the manufacturing and marine trades industry.

Successful Strategies for Transitioning Trainees into Employment

Although partnerships faced many challenges related to the transition from training to employment in the 2016 RJRI implementation process, they also utilized several strategies that helped them successfully transition their trainees into gainful employment in the sector.

Bridging the gap between training and employment

Some partnerships helped participants bridge the gap between the end of training and employment by planning trainings whose endings coincided with industry hiring periods, ensuring that industry companies would be seeking new employees. Other partnerships worked to hire trainees in industry jobs prior to the start of training, which removed any gap between the end of training and the start of employment. This was successfully executed by the Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership, which hired all training participants at the start of training.

Providing post-training services

Several partnerships helped their trainees transition from training to employment by providing them with post-training services. Some partnerships subsidized the payroll of trainees for a period of time after training to make the hiring of the trainees more enticing and less risky for industry employers. Others provided case management services that helped trainees find employment. For some partnerships, these services focused more on helping participants find jobs, while other partnerships worked on preparing trainees for the interview process by providing them with such supports such as appropriate clothing.

Implementing industry-valued training programs

Many programs helped their trainees transition from training to employment by providing them with training that was valued by the industry. Trainees that were trained by these partnerships received the skills and information necessary to be successful in the industry. As a result, industry employers were eager to hire trainees at the conclusion of training. Many partnerships paired effective training with careful participant selection and screening, which ensured that most trainees accepted into the training program would be interested and prepared to enter their industry at the completion of training. When correctly applied, this screening prevented partnerships from training participants who were unwilling or unable to find industry employment at the end of training.

Connecting trainees with employers

Several partnerships helped their trainees transition from training to employment by connecting trainees to employers during the training program. Many partnerships accomplished this by connecting participants to on-the-job training, internships, or apprenticeships as part of the training program. Other partnerships held events during, or at the conclusion of, the training program where industry employers and leaders could meet trainees and understand the training program they were undertaking, while trainees could network with potential employers. Still other partnerships networked with industry employers on the behalf of trainees to help employers consider hiring program graduates.

Best Practices

Based on the experiences of the partnerships involved in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant, several best practices for the transition from training to employment emerged:

- Temporarily subsidize the payroll of employers to ensure a smooth transition from training to employment.

- To the extent possible, hire training participants on a provisional basis before they actually enter training.
- Ensure that training programs fill an important gap between existing training and employment needs.
- Plan the completion of trainings to coincide with industry hiring seasons to avoid long gaps between training and employment.
- Hold industry social events during training that allow participants to network with employers.
- Allow training participants to apply skills during workplace site visits.
- Design internship programs that are not optional, thus avoiding the underutilization of these internships by program participants.
- Maximize the use of on-the-job training and internships to expose employers to trainees.
- Provide comprehensive case management services to training participants after the completion of training to help them find and attain industry-related employment.
- Evaluate participant performance and employer satisfaction after the training to assist in the continuous improvement of the training program.
- Vet training participants before entering employment to ensure that they are a good fit for the industry.
- Conduct pre-screening before training begins to ensure that participants are employable in the sector.
- Identify the match between the recruitment target population and the clearance items needed for employment in an industry.

Recommendations

Successfully transitioning program participants from training to employment is essential to the success of Real Jobs Rhode Island's mission to create sustainable jobs. The following are the key recommendations for the Department of Labor and Training to ensure the success of this transition.

- Evaluate whether the sector needs workers in the short term (when training programs are being offered) or needs workers for the long-term sustainability of the industry.
- Provide financial incentives for employers to take on recent trainees or create an incentive program to offset costs associated with hiring new employees.
- Convene industry partners to consider ways to minimize the disruption to production when participants are being trained.
- Showcase employers that successfully integrate employees of color and women into the workplace so that other partnerships can learn from their successes.
- Learn how other industries with internship and apprenticeship programs develop the training capacity to support interested job prospects so that these insights can be shared with those industries lacking the training capacity for these initiatives.
- Encourage partners with low rates of employment after training to assess how they can make their training program more attractive to employers.
- To the extent possible, work with all state agencies and administrative units to ensure that licensure exams for RJRI partners are offered regularly.
- Develop a model paid internship, apprenticeship, or training program that can serve as a template for employers aspiring to facilitate easier transitions into employment.

- Assist partnerships in making sure industry partners are committed to hiring trainees prior to the start of training.
- Ensure that partnerships have a clear understanding of the hiring or internship prerequisites of employer partners.
- Assist partnerships in condensing training programs when possible, especially when such condensing is necessary for training to be completed within industry hiring windows.
- Provide employer partners training that describes the barriers and needs of marginalized populations, and connect employer partners with resources to help them overcome these needs.
- Overcome participation barriers by paying for accident insurance to minimize risk for employers and training programs.
- Work with employers to determine whether pre-screening protocols are absolutely necessary to the industry or if they are posing a barrier to successful hiring and sector growth.
- Encourage partnerships that are serving industries that require credit checks, background checks, and health screenings for employment to consider "green housing" initiatives.
  - These initiatives target high school or college students who are less likely to have experienced situations that prevent successful clearance of these barriers and are, thus, more eligible for employment.

Table. 9. 1. Transition to Employment Metrics for New Workers[52]

Partnership Name[53]	Completed Training	Target Employed	Employed
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership	40	3	8
Biomedical Equipment Technician and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program	4	4	3
Residential Construction Partnership	30	40	20
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program	12	10	7
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative	16	48	10
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership	49	33	42
Healthy Jobs RI Partnership	16	18	2
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership	N/A[54]	10	14
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership	46	34	33
Healthcare Training Collaborative	57	60	43
Insurance Innovation Partnership	7	20	5
Aquaculture Training Partnership	25	24	10
Building Futures Partnership	61	45	34
CNA Talent Network Partnership	9	20	7
Partnership for Real IT Jobs	30	40	4
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women	41	30	20
Design Forward Partnership	31	10	2
Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership	43	40	19
Real Jobs Partnership of Northern Rhode Island	13	15	13
Totals	530	504	296
Percent Employed of Trained	56%		
Percent Employed of Target Employed	59%		

[52] The data in this figure represents metrics pertaining to new workers, including the number of new workers that completed training, the target employment goals for new workers, and the number of new workers who were employed after training. This data does not include incumbent workers.
[53] The Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island, MedTech Innovation Engine, Rhode Island Food Management Training Partnership, Rhode Island Financial Skills Initiative, Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership, Real Jobs IT Partnership, and Phoenix Partnership did not train new employees, and thus did not deal with the transition from training to employment.
[54] The Man-Up 2 Careers Partnership referred participants to other RJRI training programs, and thus did not have any participants complete training. However, it did refer 14 of its trainees to other RJRI partnerships, and all of those referrals received training-related employment.

Section 10: Evaluation of the Department of Labor and Training

In this section we discuss the partnerships' views of the mission of RJRI and their overall experience with it, the challenges and strengths of the program, their interactions with DLT staff, and their recommendations for improvement. Overall, the partnerships reported positive experiences with the program, but some key features of the program were highlighted for improvement and for ensuring the maintenance of good relationships between the DLT and sector partners. We also include here our recommended changes to RJRI procedures that we identified while evaluating the program.

Program Mission and Overall Assessment

When partnerships were asked to assess the overall program, the words that they used most often were "flexible" and "responsive." A number of grantees also described the program as "open," "encouraging," and "business friendly." Partnerships also felt as though the program allowed the DLT to become more active partners with businesses in developing the sector and the economy and that the DLT encouraged them to adopt new programs, think outside the box, and develop innovative ideas. In addition, grantees highlighted several aspects of RJRI as positive features by noting that the program allowed them to learn about opportunities across the state for workforce development funding and programming, while also networking with other agencies and business leaders.

Several grantees also mentioned the mission of RJRI as part of their positive experience. Three primary features were the most commonly highlighted elements of the mission that partnerships appreciated: the focus on long term sustainability in building a future workforce, the ability of employers to work in teams and the focus on connecting employers within a sector, and the spotlight on expanding and building new programming guided by employer input. In addition, other partnerships noted that they appreciated that the program seemed to be working to reduce duplication in programming and responded quickly to employer needs.

The partnerships also noted that by actively bringing stakeholders together across organizations, funding all parts of proposals, and helping with recruitment, the DLT helped them to achieve their goals. In particular, partnerships appreciated the DLT's efforts to bring employers and community organizations together while also bringing to the table other government agencies that supported their efforts.

To the extent possible, the DLT should continue to assemble other government agencies and community organizations while also actively recruiting new businesses to work with partnerships.

DLT Personnel

DLT personnel received very high marks from the partnerships. Not one partnership negatively assessed DLT staff or its leadership. Twenty different partnerships described DLT grant advisors as helpful and supportive. Others used words like "engaged" and "flexible," and praised DLT staff for responding quickly whenever a partnership had a question. It became evident from our conversations with the partnerships that a positive administrative culture had

been established at the DLT and that a strong sense of mission was instilled among members of the staff implementing RJRI. Moreover, many of the grants noted how important it was that the grant advisor seemed honestly interested and enthusiastic about their industry. On several occasions partnerships mused over whether the grant advisor wanted to be a member of their industry, given their level of commitment and excitement for sector programming. For example, one partnership commented that the advisor "seems like she has a general excitement and interest in our participants. She comes to events, comes to meetings. They have all been very, very amenable. I think it really reflects how excited and engaged they are over there [at DLT]."

Another grantee described how one grant advisor had assisted with some of the more arduous aspects of the grant, describing her in the following way: "She is like sunshine, and fresh air, and caffeine. She's wonderful and she bends over backwards. And she does all of these things, thank God. Because if we had to do that, I would go out of my mind."

Some of the grantees praised the willingness of grant advisors to come to the partnerships instead of insisting that all meetings and interactions happen at the DLT. In the words of one grantee, "if something needs to be signed or delivered or anything, [the grant advisor] will physically come out and pick it up from us. I've never seen that before, and that is absolutely fantastic."

These positive interactions with DLT staff gave the partnerships faith that the grant advisors believed in their mission and were committed to building the industry and putting people to work. This faith translated into a lot of trust and positive feelings toward the entire program and agency, causing the partnerships to feel as if they were part of a team with DLT staff. As one partner put it, "I've never experienced anything like it…. we're on the same team at the end of the day. It's not like state versus provider. I'm really happy with the staff."

The only shortcoming related to DLT staff that was mentioned in our interviews occurred when grant advisors made decisions early in the grant process that were overruled by DLT leadership. This caused a few partnerships to be unsure whether they could trust the decisions made by the grant advisors. However, this usually was pointed out as a matter of growing pains, as the DLT temporarily working out its policies and procedures, and one that had become less of an issue overtime.

DLT should continue to foster a culture of supportive excitement between its staff and the partnerships to keep these positive assessments. This culture generated a lot of good will and excitement and a general reassessment of what is possible when teaming with government from employers and industry experts.

RJRI Events/Meetings

RJRI grantees were required to attend bi-monthly technical assistance/information exchange meetings. Several grantees identified the meetings as important for creating networks, learning about programming, and keeping everyone on the same page as program requirements changed. One of the grantees described it as "taking several miscellaneous silos across the state and bringing everyone together." The meetings also allowed DLT staff and leadership to listen and respond to the concerns of grantees.

Yet, many grantees bemoaned that they were not informed about these required meetings until after having an active contract with the DLT. For them the meetings were a major time commitment, particularly when commuting to the DLT's offices, which, for some, meant spending half of a work day traveling. The grantees did not hesitate to propose some suggestions about future meetings while describing their experiences. These suggestions included having thematic discussions. One partnership expressed an interest in having one of the meetings focus on strategies for successful recruitment "because we encounter the same situations...the same barriers." Others suggested holding fewer meetings and/or holding them less often but for a longer period of time. This would allow the same amount of information to be shared but decrease the time spent traveling to the meetings.

Paperwork and Reporting

Paperwork and reporting were by far the largest challenge for the partnerships. The partnerships noted that both the amount and the changing nature of the paperwork required for the proposal application, reporting, expenditures, enrolling participants in training, and gaining reimbursement were major barriers to participation in RJRI. All grantees understood that reporting was necessary for transparency, funding, and accountability, and many grantees explicitly expressed that a taxpayer-funded program should receive rigorous scrutiny and have stringent reporting standards. Yet, through our interviews we learned from grantees that reporting and invoicing caused major headaches that can be prevented by taking proactive steps. In particular, the program would be well served by being mindful that changing reporting and paperwork requirements at such a rapid pace may create bottlenecks for grantees attempting to implement programming. Any program delivering government-funded grants no doubt will involve paperwork and reporting requirements, and so we suggest that the DLT leadership and staff consider either minimize changes to paperwork and reporting requirements to the extent feasible, be more transparent with grantees about why paperwork and/or reporting requirements are changing while also explaining to them the additional time burden of making the change, and allow for adjustments to timelines or other expectations to account for the additional administrative effort involved when there are changes in protocol.

Trainee Participation Information
The DLT greatly decreased the information that was necessary for partnerships to report on individual participants. The first intake form was so extensive that it dissuaded participants from enrolling and was overly burdensome on partnerships. To address this, the DLT reduced the form to just one page of information to ease the burden of enrolling participants. Partnerships saw this change as a positive one that demonstrated to them the DLT's responsiveness to their concerns. However, several partnerships felt uncomfortable collecting and being responsible for storing even the information on the shortened form. Some partnerships would have liked DLT staff to attend recruitment/training sessions for the collection and security of Social Security

numbers and information considered to be sensitive and difficult to collect from trainees concerned about their privacy. Others wished this information could be entered online instead of on paper.

Financials

        The vast majority of partnerships spent significantly more time than they expected reporting either for performance metrics or for reimbursement. While the partnerships acknowledged the importance of transparency and reporting, they also explained that the level of paperwork and documentation required for RJRI was far greater than for other programs. Several partnerships explained that they were not compensated for time spent on paperwork and documentation and that it interfered with other program responsibilities, required the hiring of new staff, or caused them to dedicate many hours to these activities despite lacking the organizational capacity to do so.

        Several partnerships felt that if the DLT had explained the type of information required at the outset of the program, they would have saved countless hours. Some of the partnerships recounted how they submitted paperwork based on their past experiences with the DLT, but later were told to provide documentation they no longer were able to collect. Several of these partnerships explained that this resulted in unnecessary lost revenue. The lead partners experiencing this were especially concerned that approaching their partners for additional information caused them to look unprofessional.

        Even at the end of the first year, at least four partnerships remained confused about what was and was not reimbursable through the DLT. Additionally, the partnerships suggested that, although the DLT's flexibility concerning financial reporting was appreciated, having a reporting schedule that could be used for planning purposes would improve the process of grant implementation.

Performance Metrics

        Each grantee was required, as a condition of receiving a RJRI grant, to set specific performance benchmarks. In the original RFP, the DLT sought to "review the progress of program design and development and achieved outcomes and performance metrics... at minimum, on an annual basis."[55]

        Some partnerships were unable to track performance metrics that were included in the addenda for evaluation. This led to confusion over how to evaluate partnership programming, which lessened the utility of the addenda for reporting and decreased the ability of the partnership to use the performance metrics in the addenda for self-evaluation or for tracking their progress. One partnership felt that the performance metrics did not accurately capture the work that its partners were doing. Another struggled to collect performance metrics relating to the wages and career advancement of incumbent workers, which did not allow it to measure program effectiveness for the first year, but it nevertheless developed a tracking system to determine program effectiveness for the following year. Future performance metrics should include only ones that can and will be tracked by either the DLT or the grantee and should be chosen after discussion with the grantee about how the metrics will be tracked.

        Another element of the performance metrics that requires attention is that the training metrics did not allow training participants to "drop out" of programming without harming

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[55] Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training: *Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals*. July 31, 2015. http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/ImpG/RJRIImpGrantSol0715.pdf

partnership efforts to meet performance benchmarks. Performance metrics often aimed to have the same number of workers enrolled and completing training. For example, a grant would aim to enroll ten individuals and to have all ten individuals complete training. While this may seem intuitive, part of the objective of most partnerships was to increase retention by allowing trainees to gain exposure to the industry in order to learn whether it was a good career choice for them. This increases employee retention by decreasing the number of trained individuals who enter the field only to find out they dislike working in the sector. However, performance metrics that do not acknowledge attrition related to these factors increases pressure on partnerships to keep training participants in the program even if a) the partnership would be just as well-served without them, and b) the trainee could enter a different training program that better aligns with his or her career interests. Future performance metrics should acknowledge the goal of assessing job fit through the training program and aim to recruit more workers for training than the target for completion.

Proposal Process and Grant Structure

Many partnerships expressed that the six month funding structure was not working for their organization and that they felt misled by the original Request For Proposals[56] and grant awarding with regard to the length of the contract. Several partnerships interpreted the RFP as guaranteeing 2-3 years of funding, only to be informed later that it would only be for approximately six months. Under Section 1.4 of the RFP (Grant Duration), the document stated, "The grant period for a Real Jobs Partnership is for up to five years, from November 16, 2015 through November 15, 2020. The Partnership will initially be authorized for three years, until November 15, 2018, with an option to renew for an additional two years. Funds will be reauthorized on a yearly basis based upon annual approval, and allocations will be based on available funds and performance of the workforce training plan." Most of the grantees submitted proposals and budgets for two three-year projects, but once the addenda were submitted, most projects were approved for only six months to a year. While grantees supported being able to modify programming and "pitch" new ideas and new programming, the insecurity introduced by such short-term funding agreements left grantees ill at ease, particularly for staffing and long-term strategic planning decisions.

Although several grantees felt the addenda process was helpful in capturing metrics and the real purpose of the programming, they also noted that it would have been easier if the RFP had simply been clearer and in the format of the addenda. At least one grantee felt they spent an inordinate amount of time, longer than any grant they ever had previously, on their proposal, just to have it discarded and redone in the form of the addenda. The fact that the original proposals were designed for multiple year programming only added to the confusion about the funding program lasting for just six months.

The grant modification process, on the other hand, was widely regarded as a good innovation and one allowing the partnerships to respond to the needs of businesses far more effectively and in a timely manner.

Also, some of the partnerships that had Governor's Workforce Board funding prior to receiving RJRI funding were especially concerned about future DLT funding lines, specifically regarding the Governor's Workforce Board, and did not fully grasp how the two DLT programs were related.

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[56] *Ibid.*

Changes Implemented at DLT

Grantees supported and applauded several of the changes implemented by DLT over the course of the 2016 implementation year. These included the faster pace of reimbursement, the ability to modify programming to meet goals, and the development of the grant guidebook. The effort to streamline processes and forms, like the intake form mentioned above, was the most common element noted by partnerships about how working with the DLT had improved over the course of the year.

The Role of Partnerships within the RJRI Program

A few grantees felt forced into partnerships and that the sector plan was not always consistent with small "pitches" for programming conducted for a single employer by a sector intermediary. Moreover, the role of the lead grantee in sponsoring new "pitches" also was controversial. While some liked the ability to run new programming through their organizations at a different place, others expressed that it made them feel ill at ease putting their organization's name on something they were not actually responsible for implementing. The DLT may want to readdress the limits on forming new partnerships outside of the formal grant process to avoid having partnerships feel obliged to sponsor programming they are not running directly, or help interested employers identify other partnerships to work with.

Recruitment Confusion

Several grantees were confused about the role of the One Stop Career Centers in recruiting and wanted more help from DLT in putting them in touch with un- and underemployed workers. One grantee suggested notifying people receiving unemployment or whose unemployment had recently expired through the mail about RJRI training opportunities, noting that the DLT has those records but the partnerships do not. DLT could and should also work with the various state departments overseeing social services utilized by the un- and underemployed to notify recipients of state aid about available training opportunities.

Uncompensated Elements of Programming

Partnerships noted that the planning grants were very helpful for developing the partnerships and creating initial program designs. However, after that original proposal, any new program design or modification was created without compensation. One grantee noted that "you can't develop something that's customized in five minutes. I mean you have to spend a good amount of time. It takes ten hours of development to deliver one hour of training." Earmarking additional money for development/retooling or the ability to apply for a second planning grant after each round of implementation is one possible solution for this issue, particularly when the sector demands building more customized training modules, or making major modifications to trainings to meet industry needs.

Reimbursement

Several grantees were impressed at the fast rate at which DLT financially reimbursed the partnerships for training costs. When financial reimbursement began taking longer, however, these grantees started growing concerned about their cash flow as it became harder to sustain their operating costs. More than one partnership found this to be especially difficult when they needed to identify immediate funding sources to deliver the training so that they could be reimbursed by DLT later. However, the attempt by DLT to streamline reimbursement to the shortest period possible given federal guidelines and thereby facilitating partnerships "keeping the lights on" should be retained and improved if at all possible.

Facilitating Sector Strategy and Evaluation

Partnerships wanted DLT to help them be more strategic in their efforts, develop strategies for sector intermediaries and organizations to work together instead of competing for resources, and bring more employers on board. Several grantees hoped that the initial investment in employer recruitment that was made prior to the awarding of the RJRI grants would continue and bring more employers into existing partnerships.

Lack of Clarity about Support for Intermediary Support and Development

The Request for Proposals includes a section about the importance of the Workforce Intermediary. However, the ability to apply for financial and other support for workforce intermediaries was not clear in the RFP. This type of capacity building is not listed in Section 2.4 as an eligible expense and is not included in section 2.2 where the purpose of implementation grants is described. As a result, while some grantees received significant and necessary support to build capacity, other Workforce Intermediaries felt as though they needed the support but did not understand that they were eligible to apply for it. This may have been due to the RFP's language, which stated "While Real Jobs Rhode Island can and seeks to fund costs associated with capacity building (e.g. administration, capital costs, etc.), payments will be made largely or entirely on the basis of achieving specific outcome targets." Future RFPs should be clearer about DLT's interest and willingness to invest in the development of Intermediary capacity.

The Healthcare Industry

In the healthcare industry, two partnerships set out to provide training for participants to become CNAs. CNAs are important members of the healthcare team, as they provide much of the direct care to residents in long-term care settings and to patients in hospitals, and these positions enable individuals to enter the healthcare industry pipeline, which can lead to higher paying jobs with more responsibilities and additional training over time. Unfortunately, however, CNA positions are low-wage positions (typically paying about $12 an hour) that involve many responsibilities and demands, including extensive training and certification requirements, long hours (often in the evening or overnight and on weekends and holidays), and the need to provide patient-centered, compassionate care in sometimes challenging and stressful environments. As a

result, recruitment is difficult and staff turnover is high, which is costly for organizations and contributes to negative patient outcomes.

While the need within the industry to identify and retain CNAs is high, the two grantees within this sector struggled to identify RJRI-funded training programs that were sustainable. These partnerships experienced multiple difficulties in recruiting and retaining participants due to the lack of capacity to pay attractive wages, difficulties with potential trainees' passing required health tests and aptitude assessments and navigating the bureaucracy surrounding these issues, challenges in finding childcare that met trainees' needs, and transportation barriers. Further, these two partnerships struggled with staff turnover within their own organizations and within partner organizations that made implementation challenging. Finally, the need for a strong sector intermediary that served entities state-wide within healthcare became particularly apparent to the partnership whose lead applicant was an employer.

Due to the difficulties within these partnerships, we suggest that RJRI continues to identify ways to help the healthcare sector fill CNA positions, as this will continue to be a need in Rhode Island. Rhode Island anticipates that by 2030, there will be 100,000 more older adults than in 2010,[57] and currently the Ocean State has the highest proportion of adults 85 or older in the U.S.[58] (the population most likely to require extensive health and long-term care). We recommend that DLT work with key partners from the healthcare sector to determine how to improve the working conditions and the pay for CNAs, who are essential employees within the healthcare sector. One idea would be for DLT staff and healthcare administrators to have an open forum or focus group with a facilitator where issues and ideas are discussed to identify what can be done within the industry and with support from DLT to improve working conditions and pay for CNAs. We also suggest that RJRI work with the state legislature to revise the Rhode Island Promise scholarship to enable RI residents to complete the CNA training tuition free even though the participants may not gain an associate degree. The demand for these positions and the many barriers to entry and retention should put CNAs in a special category that justifies incentivizing the program. Additional monies and support also should be allocated for recruiting and retaining participants in these programs.

Best Practices

Based on the activities conducted by the Rhode Island DLT and changes implemented by the agency during the 2016 RJRI implementation grant cycle, several best practices emerged:

- Actively recruit businesses to participate.
- Focus on long-term sustainability of economic sectors and employee success.
- Bring other government agencies and community organizations together and actively recruit new businesses to work together with partnerships.
- Allow partnerships to modify their budget and activities as they receive feedback about how the programs are working and what they need or do not need compared with what they had proposed.
- Be flexible, responsive, and open to sector ideas and constraints.

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[57] State of Rhode Island, Division of Planning, 2013, http://www.planning.ri.gov/planning-areas/demographics/data/population-projections.php
[58] Subcommittee of the Long Term Care Coordinating Council. *Age-Friendly RI, Aging in Community Final Report*, June 2016, http://agefriendlyri.org/reports.html

- Treat businesses and trainees as clients and customers, not recipients.
- Encourage new and innovative ways of thinking about sector workforce development.
- Facilitate sectors learning about opportunities across the state for workforce development funding and programming, and help them network with other agencies and business leaders.
- Respond quickly to partnership questions and requests.
- Maintain a culture of enthusiasm where staff members are genuinely interested in the health and success of the sector.
- Send staff to grantee/employer offices to conduct meetings.

Recommendations

Based on the partnerships' feedback about working with DLT and our own evaluation of the processes utilized in the 2016 RJRI implementation grant cycle, we recommend:

- Revise processes, reporting, and financials to:
  - ensure that partnerships understand the costs of participation before submitting applications;
  - provide reporting requirements that allow digital entry of intake or send a DLT staff member to conduct intake at partnership events;
  - minimize changes to protocol and processes adopted during a grant period;
  - make sure reporting requirements are stated explicitly up front and create a manual for how to report so that partnerships know what is required for reimbursement before programming begins;
  - be as predictable as possible regarding the time required to deliver financial reimbursement;
  - institute a reporting schedule for grantees; and
  - lengthen the agreement structure for funding to allow participating organizations to plan for longer than six months.
- Revise the design of performance metrics to:
  - include only performance metrics that can and are going to be tracked by either DLT or the grantee; and
  - include projections for program attrition in performance metrics so that the goal for recruiting into a program and the goal for completing a program are not identical.
- Revise the Request for Proposals to:
  - be clearer about the length of the funding versus the length of the partnership;
  - mirror either the addenda format or the case study format to reduce the need for the additional time required and the frustration involved in converting proposals to the addenda format.; and
  - be clearer about the DLT's interest and willingness to invest in the development of intermediary capacity.
- Be up front with grantees about what ways DLT can and cannot help with recruitment.
- For partnerships targeting unemployed people, facilitate a way to find the unemployed by using DLT databases and sending letters/emails to those who have recently been on unemployment or who are known to be out of work.

- Make sure attendance at grantee meetings is included in the Request for Proposals and either reduce the number of grantee meetings or allow for virtual participation.
- Allow partnerships to receive a second planning grant to evaluate, develop, and retool programming, or allow for compensation for this process within the implementation grant. Alternatively, incorporate funding for program evaluation into each grant to allow grantees to assess what is working/not working in their program.
- Within the healthcare sector:
    - work with key partners in the healthcare industry to determine how to improve the working conditions and wages for CNAs, given their essential nature in the healthcare industry but wage-induced high attrition rates; and
    - work with the legislature to request an extension of the Rhode Island Promise program at CCRI to enable Rhode Island residents to complete the CNA training tuition free even though the participants may not gain an associate degree.

Section 11: Methodology

The URI team utilized case study methodology to meet project objectives. The team included Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz (Principal Investigator), Skye Leedahl (co-investigator), and Aaron Ley (co-investigator), along with student researchers Bridget Hall, Kristin Sodhi, and Marissa DeOliveira, overseen by the principal investigator (PI) and co-investigators (Co-Is). The PI, Co-Is, and student researchers formed the research team for this analysis. The project had four key objectives: 1. Complete case studies for each of the 26 grantees awarded a 2016 RJRI implementation grant; 2. Conduct an overall evaluation of the RJRI programs based on the 26 case studies; 3. Complete an evaluation of DLT efforts in implementing and administering the RJRI program based on grantee feedback; and 4. Conduct an institutional history of the internal challenges facing program evaluation at the DLT. To meet these project objectives, the research team conducted a comprehensive literature review of the academic, government, and trade publications on sector workforce development programming; conducted in-person interviews with key staff from RJRI grantees; reviewed program materials; and met with DLT grant advisors. In completing the case studies, we also reviewed outcomes measures (quantitative data) provided by DLT as reported by the grantees. To complete the overall evaluation of the RJRI program and of DLT efforts, we conducted extensive qualitative analysis of the case studies. The narrative below presents specific methods used to complete project tasks within each section of the report.

Case Studies

The Co-Is along with the help of the student researchers completed 26 case studies, one for each of the partnerships that received an RJRI implementation grant during 2016. To write the case studies, we utilized information from in-person interviews and program materials. To form the areas for evaluation of the case studies, the PI and Co-Is developed a semi-structured interview guide reviewed by the DLT RJRI leadership. The interview questions are listed below. Prior to conducting the interviews, the research team reviewed the proposals and addenda (contracts) for each grantee and wrote summaries of the grants to acquaint ourselves with each of the partnerships.

From November 2016 to November 2017, the Co-Is conducted in-person interviews with key staff from the main applicant for each grant. The two Co-Is divided up the interviews, and each researcher was responsible for completing 13 interviews. We utilized purposive sampling and selected the key staff from each partnership after consulting with the DLT grant advisors. The grant advisors provided contact information and suggested months for the interview based on implementation progress. Overall, one in-person interview was completed with each grantee. Several grantees required one or more follow up interviews.

To recruit the staff for the interviews, one Co-I went to a DLT RJRI event to present to the grantees. At this meeting, the URI researcher introduced the evaluation and informed the grantees in attendance that we would be contacting staff from the main applicant for each grant. Following this meeting, student researchers began calling and emailing the grantees to arrange in-person meetings. The initial contact person for the grant decided whether he/she would be interviewed solely or if multiple people would be in attendance during the scheduled interview

time. See Table 11.1 below for a delineation of the number of people interviewed in person for each grant.

The two Co-Is met with partnership representatives at their locations across the state (see Table 11.1 for a listing of the various communities we visited). We scheduled each interview for 1 and a half hours, and each interview took 1-2 hours. To begin each interview, the Co-I reviewed informed consent procedures (IRB Approval and Consent documents are below). Those interviewed were informed that the last portion of the interview about DLT administration would be confidential and not included in the case studies, and the information reported only in the aggregate within the report. Interviews were audio-recorded. In two instances, interviewees declined being audio-recorded, due to the privacy concerns of one participant and technical/scheduling issues for another participant. In these instances, the interviewer took extensive notes and followed up with the interviewee as needed to address any gaps.

Following each interview, the interviewer wrote down notes in a pre-designed case study template that included information from the proposal and addenda. This information included the primary headings of the case studies (e.g., Industry Need, Sector Need, Partnership Formation, Implementation Activities, etc.). This helped to ensure that we did not miss key details about the interview and that we were able to quickly and easily jot down information that would be pertinent to the writing of the case study. Audio recordings were sent to Rev.com to be transcribed. The research team also conducted follow-up interviews as needed with the main grantee. These follow-up interviews took place in person, over the telephone, or through email conversation, depending on information needs and availability of the staff.

One student and one Co-I drafted each case study. The student/Co-I main drafter was the same as the Co-I who conducted the interview. We began with a basic template that included the main sections of the case study. To write the case study, the student investigator worked with the Co-I responsible for the interview to review all the materials associated with the grant, including the proposal, addenda, interview transcription, notes and audio, and any other relevant information. After drafting the first few case studies, we refined our template to also include sub-headings for the Successes and Challenges sections (e.g., Partnerships, Recruitment, Trainee Barriers).

The team's process for writing each case study involved multiple steps: 1. Utilize the agreed-upon key sections for each case study; 2. Incorporate any information from the interviewer's notes following the interview; 3. Include information from the implementation grant proposal narrative, addenda, numerical outcomes tables with data from DLT, and any supplementary material provided by the grantees based on the sections of the study (beginning with the first section, "Sector Need," and working through each section); 4. Add information from the transcript; 5. Finalize the draft of the case study for review by the PI and make notes on any missing information; 6. Receive and address feedback from the PI; 7. Correspond with the grant staff to answer any remaining questions (through either phone calls or email exchanges); 8. Send the case study to the grant advisor to answer any remaining questions and fill in remaining case-specific elements of the performance metrics tables; 9. Correspond and meet with the grant advisor(s) to incorporate the answers to any remaining questions and to verify performance metrics; 10. Finally, the PI reviewed the case studies to check for language consistency, grammar, and clarity. These steps involved substantial contribution and oversight from the PI throughout the process. The inclusion of multiple researchers enhanced the rigor and trustworthiness (including credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability) of the data and the analysis process.

Performance Metrics

Performance metrics for each grantee were collected and reported by the Department of Labor and Training for its internal grant-tracking purposes. The URI team did not collect any data related to the performance metrics independently. The PI and a student researcher determined the performance metrics included in the case studies and analysis based on the addenda each grantee set up after its contract with the DLT had been awarded. Each grantee set its own performance metrics in consultation with DLT grant managers. All performance metrics set in the addenda were included in the case studies. Although almost all partnerships determined targets for recruitment, training, and employment, most partnerships also included additional metrics specific to their sector. These included but were not limited to employee retention, career advancement, partners added, reduced recidivism, and increased wages.

The DLT reported recruitment-, training-, and employment-related performance metrics to the URI team in mid-2017. All information in the case studies and analysis includes only data from programs planned for the 2016 implementation year, although some 2016 programs were completed a few months into 2017 due to delays in implementation. After each case study was completed, the research team confirmed with DLT grant managers that the metrics matched their current reporting system's data and confirmed non-standard performance metrics data. This was necessary because some data changed as time progressed, such as the number of trainees employed or retained. By verifying data with DLT, we reported the most up-to-date information possible about the success of the partnership in its stated goals for 2016. Thus, the performance metrics reflect the data available at the time of writing. Several performance metrics were still being collected and therefore were not able to be collected and are noted as such in the case studies.

Analysis

Once the case studies were complete regarding content, we began our analysis of the overall program. We utilized each case study, or each grant, as the unit of analysis. We then identified a list of research/evaluation questions that guided our analysis based on the questions developed for the interviews. All case studies were entered in NVivo software, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based information for deep analysis of large volumes of data. In NVivo, we coded the case studies to correspond with the major sections of the final report, including Innovation, Partnerships, Recruitment and Outreach, Implementation/Programming, Trainee Challenges, Transition from Training to Employment, and Sustainability. For example, for Partnerships, we coded all information from the Partnership sections of each case study as well as the Partnerships sub-sections from Successes and Achievements and any information from Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Recommendations related to partnerships. We then assigned each section to a team made up of the PI or a Co-I and a student researcher.

After the information was organized based on major sections of the report and subsections, our analysis followed several stages. First, we used an open-coding process, in which we identified themes across the case studies. We did not have preconceived codes; rather, we allowed themes to emerge from the data. After all themes from the sub-sections were

identified, we then categorized them based on commonalities.[59] One faculty researcher (the PI or a Co-I) coded each major section and its sub-sections. Then, a second faculty investigator went through each document to examine the codes and disagree or agree with the first researcher's coding decisions. In cases of inter-coder disagreement, the two researchers discussed and came to an agreement. We utilized this process for the purpose of investigator triangulation to increase the credibility and validity of the findings. This also enabled us to calculate inter-coder agreement. Intercoder agreement/reliability was high across the sections at 84.81 percent.[60]

The only deviation from this process was in two cases. First, we used the Sustainability section as a template to test our research process. This section was coded by the entire research team, and then we discussed anywhere our codes disagreed and used this section to formalize a process for all other sections. Second, the Programming section was coded first by a student researcher, with the PI as the secondary coder.

Once all documents for a section were coded by two of the PI/Co-Is and checked by a student researcher, the student researcher drafted an outline for the section to cover the themes identified in coding for the faculty investigator in charge of the section to review. Once the faculty investigator approved, the student researcher drafted the section and the two investigators (always including the PI) edited it for accuracy, consistency, and language.

Two sections of the report contain evaluations of individual partnerships by the research team. In the Sustainability section of the report, each partnership also was evaluated on the likelihood that it would be sustainable without state funding. This evaluation was based on the plans presented by each partnership during the 2016 RJRI implementation period and the partnership's own statements regarding its sustainability and strength. This determination does not take the current status of the partnership into account, nor does it include the influence of outside factors, such as state funding decisions. This information was collected from each partnership's 2016 Implementation Grant application and interviews with partnership leaders.

Similarly, each partnership was evaluated on the extent of its innovation in the Innovation section of the report. This evaluation was based on the partnership's own statements of its innovation and the programs and services implemented by each partnership in 2016. The tables in the analysis were created using either the performance metrics reported to the research team but aggregated for specific questions that were identified in the analysis (for example, did paying grantees increase the likelihood of program completion?) or by compiling the number of partnerships that mentioned a certain challenge (for example, the number of partnerships citing transportation challenges).

DLT Evaluation

Each interview included an anonymous section regarding the partnership's experience working with the DLT over the course of the 2016 implementation year. These questions were intended to identify what the department was doing well and where it needed improvement. During the case study writing, the Co-Is created a separate document including comments on DLT and answers to questions about working with DLT and wrote paragraphs reflecting the overall assessment of the DLT from the partnership perspective.

[59] Creswell, J. W. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* (1998). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
[60] Saldana, J. *The Coding manual for qualitative researchers.* (2005). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Second, using the interview questions from sections 7 and 8 of the interview guide, the PI coded answers in Nvivo for themes under the headings in the questions (overall challenges and help, DLT staff, reporting procedures, etc.) using an open coding process. Codes were developed by identifying themes in the answers (e.g., "helpful," "frustrating," "time consuming," "improved") and coding them in Nvivo. The codes were refined over time and checked multiple times to ensure that previous information was coded to reflect any new codes that emerged throughout the analysis process. Once the list of codes was complete, the PI then produced counts for each code in Nvivo to get an aggregate assessment of the major challenges and benefits of working with the department.[61] Once coding was complete, a student researcher along with the lead PI for the section outlined and drafted the analysis. The Co-PIs then compared their notes from the interview transcripts to the outline to identify any disagreements in interpretation. These disagreements were discussed, and the transcripts revisited to make sure the research team all agreed on the interpretation and analysis.

Third, with assistance from a course of program evaluation graduate students learning about qualitative analysis, one Co-I with specific expertise in the health workforce arena as a former CNA examined challenges specific to the healthcare sector partnerships that provided training programs for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). Following discussions among the research team, we identified this training area as one that encountered many barriers in meeting its goals and as an area of continued, growing need for Rhode Island. Therefore, we specifically targeted this area to identify common challenges and identify potential solutions.

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[61] *Ibid*.

Table 11.1: Partnership Interview Information

Partnership Name	# of People Interviewed In-Person	Interview Location
Real Jobs Rhode Island Cybersecurity Partnership	1	Middletown
Biomedical Equipment and Data Scientist Apprenticeship Program	1	Warwick
Residential Construction Partnership	4	East Providence
Rhode Island Urban Apprenticeship Program	3	East Providence
RI Manufacturing Growth Collaborative	1	South Kingstown
Marine Trades and Composites Partnership	1	Bristol
Leadership Development Partnership of Rhode Island	3	North Kingstown
Healthy Jobs RI Partnership	1	Providence
Man Up 2 Careers Partnership	1	Providence
Pipeline to Manufacturing Careers in Ship Building Partnership	1	Westerly
Healthcare Training Collaborative	1	Woonsocket
Medtech Innovation Engine	2	Providence
RI Food Management Training Partnership	2	Cranston
Insurance Innovation Partnership	1	Warwick
RI Financial Skills Initiative	2	Providence
Aquaculture Training Partnership	1	South Kingstown
Construction Trades Skill-Up Partnership	1	Providence
Building Futures Partnership	1	Providence
Real Jobs IT Partnership	1	Providence
CNA Talent Network	2	Providence
Phoenix Partnership	1	Woonsocket
Partnership for Real IT Jobs	1	Providence
Real Jobs Pathway for Minorities and Women	3	Providence
Design Forward Partnership	1	Providence
Westerly Regional Jobs Partnership	3	Westerly
RJ Partnership of Northern RI	2	Woonsocket
Total Number of People Interviewed In-Person	42	