



Governor's Workforce Board of Rhode Island

Real Pathways Rhode Island

Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals

Issue Date: June 16, 2020

NOTICE

A Prospective Applicant that wishes to assure receipt of any changes or additional materials related to this Solicitation should email DLT.GWBINFO@DLT.RI.GOV immediately and provide the Prospective Applicant's contact name, organizational affiliation and email address.

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
Governor's Workforce Board

KEY INFORMATION SUMMARY SHEET

Solicitation for Grant Proposals: Real Pathways Rhode Island

Solicitation Issue Date: June 16, 2020
Closing Date and Time: **Monday August 3, 2020 by 4:00pm**
Awards Announced: Mid- September

Solicitation Issuing Office: Governor's Workforce Board
Real Pathways Rhode Island Program Director
Robert Kalaskowski

Proposals are to be submitted to: **Electronically:** (pdf proposal - budget submitted via excel) to Robert Kalaskowski at robert.kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov

By Mail:
RI Department of Labor and Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920
Attention: Real Pathways RI
HAND DELIVERY CANNOT BE ACCEPTED AT THIS TIME

Pre-Proposal Conference: **Monday June 29, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EST**
Virtual Conference
Interested parties must register in advance at robert.kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov
All Conference-related materials will be made available online for those who cannot attend.

Submission of Questions: All questions related to this solicitation should be submitted via email to the following email address: DLT.GWBINFO@DLT.RI.GOV no later than **Monday July 6, 2020**

Q&A Posting: All questions and answers addressed via email or at the Pre-Proposal Conference will be posted to the Real Pathways RI website at <https://gwb.ri.gov/workforce-partner-resources> by Friday July 10, 2020

Grant Duration: The performance period for the Real Pathways Partnerships established will be until June 30, 2021 - with an option to renew the Partnership Agreement for an additional two years.

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Governor's Workforce Board is issuing this Solicitation for Implementation Grant Proposals for qualified organizations to form strategic workforce development partnerships that will collaboratively work with the State of Rhode Island and other entities to meet the unique needs of populations with barriers to employment, while also meeting the workforce needs of Rhode Island employers. Clients are expected to obtain employment and increase their career readiness/employability.

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

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

A. Real Pathways RI Overview

Real Pathways RI is a competitive workforce development grant program. It is designed to ensure that Rhode Island employers have the talent they need to compete and grow while providing targeted education and skills training to Rhode Island workers and jobseekers, which is especially critical to Rhode Island's recovery from the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of Real Pathways RI is to promote and support partnerships between and among public, private, and nonprofit agencies, education and training providers, and other partners as necessary, within a specific geographic region, or who focus on a similar population with barriers to employment (ex. Individuals with a disability, persons experiencing homelessness, former offenders, etc.). These partnerships collaborate to build workforce solutions that address the unique workforce challenge their clients face. Through such a model: efforts are coordinated, not duplicated; resources are leveraged, not overextended; and providers focus more on what they do best and less on extending their core mission to meet grant expectations.

Real Pathways RI is a companion program to Real Jobs Rhode Island (Real Jobs RI). Whereas Real Jobs RI convenes and organizes employers in a specific industry to help identify and overcome the unique workforce challenges they face; Real Pathways RI seeks to convene and organize partners in a specific region or focused on the needs of a specific population to help identify and overcome their unique workforce challenges. Real Jobs RI sector partnerships have been effective at analyzing demand and identifying current/projected opportunities within their respective industry sectors. Real Pathways partnerships are similarly expected to meet employer demand, by addressing the challenges and services gaps facing their target population or region.

Real Pathways RI is a win/win because companies get the talent they need to compete globally and grow locally, and a greater share of Rhode Islanders access economic opportunity.

Covid-19 Response and Recovery

On January 30, 2020 the outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus) was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the COVID-19 outbreak can be characterized as a pandemic. As of the release of this RFP; Rhode Island, along with the rest of the United States, is still in the early stages of our response to this outbreak; however, the immediate economic impact of the coronavirus is already being felt. In the one-month period from March 9, 2020 to April 9, 2020; Rhode Island received more than 100,000 claims for unemployment benefits related to COVID-19. By comparison, the state received around 11,600 claims in January 2020.

Real Pathways RI is poised to serve as an essential platform for aiding the response and advancing the recovery related to this crisis. As the state turns to recovery, Real Pathways RI partnerships will be a critical asset to quickly train and place unemployed Rhode Islanders with employment opportunities. In all instances, the work of Real Pathways partners will be consistent with guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and other relevant agencies to make sure our efforts are consistent with the state's strategy for containing the spread of COVID-19. The health and safety of staff, clients, and the public will be a paramount concern.

Bridging the Long-term Gap between Talent and Opportunity

Beyond responding to the immediate health and economic challenges brought about by Covid-19, Real Pathways RI endeavors to close the long-term opportunity gap between job seekers with barriers to employment and employment opportunities the state's largest and/or growing industries. To that end, the program seeks to:

- Encourage mobility for Rhode Islanders with barriers to employment through targeted job training and other workforce solutions that lead to jobs, increased wages, and increased educational/credential attainment;
- Connect RI's growing industries with much-needed talent;
- Address the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs, and sustaining or growing middle class jobs;
- Promote collaboration, not competition, between and among entities that provide employment and training services for similar populations or regions of the state; and
- Address 'systems gaps' and deficiencies within the current education and workforce development network.

The Role of the Partnership

Real Pathways RI funds the activities of Real Pathways RI Partnerships. These are collaborations of organizations (including but not limited to: public, private, community-based, and non-profit agencies, training and education providers, and others) that serve a similar population with barriers to employment (ex: Veterans, former offenders, non-English speakers) or regions of the state, and also include employer/industry partners. The purpose of these partnerships is to implement strategic plans that meet the unique needs and challenges their collective clients face, meet the needs of employers for a skilled workforce, and increase sustainable employment.

Partnerships coalesce around the needs of a similar population with barriers to employment, or region of the state with a higher than average concentration of unemployment and/or poverty. They may start with a group of organizations that observe a gap in service and opportunity for the population they collectively assist; nonprofits and local departments of social services within a region who band together to improve the lives of residents through skills training and seek to partner with employers with common workforce and training needs; or a group of employers who recognizes a common need in their industry and seek to address that need by partnering with community organizations to build pathways for traditionally underserved populations. The key to all of these partnerships is that they focus on the unique needs and challenges of job seekers with barriers to employment and include demonstrable input from employers and industry representatives who are meaningfully engaged in the development of the partnership.

These partnerships are strategic because: they are carefully built to include *all* necessary partners before workforce solutions are designed; they cut across traditional workforce, education and social services system silos; they consider the strengths, weaknesses, and resources of the larger human service/education/workforce development network; and, they are broader than the development of single job training cohort for a specific community-based organization.

The Role of the Board

Grants provided through Real Pathways RI are structured under a cooperative agreement model. In keeping with the win/win approach of the Real Pathways RI program, this model deploys the substantive expertise of Real Pathways Partnerships and the technical proficiency of Board staff to efficiently and effectively design, plan, and implement workforce strategies that serve the needs and vision of the partnership. This cooperative format promotes ease-of-use for Real Pathways Partnerships by providing a direct connection with a Real Pathways RI Grant Advisor who will offer technical and practical assistance at every step of the process, allowing for real-time adjustments to proposals and programs, and ensuring that obstacles are rapidly identified and addressed.

Program Structure

The 2020 Real Pathways RI competitive application process has two key components:

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

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

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

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

B. Purpose and Priorities of the Implementation Grant

The purpose of the Implementation Grant is to provide awardees with funding to implement workforce solutions designed to address barriers to employment and other systemic challenges facing populations with barriers to employment, or region of the state with a higher than average concentration of unemployment and/or poverty. Applicants should:

- identify target sub-population or region to be served
- identify the critical service gaps, training and education needs, or other immediate-term and long-term workforce issues facing the population or region;
- Identify the industry demand to be met through the proposed workforce solution;
- identify the training, education, systems change, and/or workforce solutions to address these needs;
- describe a detailed plan to implement these solutions;
- maximize collaboration through direct financial or in-kind contributions by partners and braiding of other public or philanthropic funding streams or in-kind support; and,
- suggest outcome targets based on available data against which success of the plan can be measured.

All Real Pathways Partnerships that receive Implementation Grant funding will be expected to submit a Comprehensive Plan within one year. A Comprehensive Plan describes the Partnership's vision for improving and coordinating workforce development services to the population or region to be served and the necessary steps to achieve this vision. As the Partnership evolves, we expect additional workforce solutions will be created. Real Pathways RI Grant Advisors will assist partnerships in the development of their Comprehensive Plan. The GWB has established administrative processes and procedures to fund subsequent training proposals and plans developed by the Partnership.

C. Requirements of a Real Pathways RI Workforce Solution

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

Workforce solutions that form the core of the Real Pathways program are finite, measurable, and perspicuous; i.e. they involve a specific number of partners, with a specific outcome and goal. It is the perspicuity of these plans that allows the state, the intermediary and the employers to measure their efficacy.

These solutions must be informed by the unique needs of the population being served, acknowledge and account for workforce, education and social services and resources already in place, and be driven by employer/industry demand. For training and employment programming, the GWB will require evidence in the proposal that employer partners were active participants in developing the workforce solution(s) proposed.

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

Plans for workforce solutions are expected to have the explicit goal of preparing job seekers with barriers to employment for existent, or soon-to-be existent, positions. **Successful plans will lead to participants being hired or promoted as a result of training or intervention.** Examples are as follows:

- 1) *Training in in-demand skills for jobseekers*, identified by employer partners (e.g., machining, medical billing, IT, sales, customer service training) and including support services not presently accessible or sufficiently provided through current resources. While not required, partnerships are encouraged to consider integrated educational and occupational training models such as 'RI-BEST';
- 2) *Career advancement strategies for incumbent workers* (e.g., a course that gives existing entry-level workers training to move up the career ladder and increase their responsibility and earnings). Incumbent worker training should lead to internal promotions, wage increases and new job openings that can be back-filled by job seekers.);
- 3) *Work readiness training* that assists and supports low-income, low-skilled or unskilled jobseekers in overcoming individual barriers to employment and helps them develop the skills necessary to maintain employment and qualify for skills training opportunities;
- 4) *Other career services* such as intensive career counseling, job coaching, and support services;
- 5) *Other solutions for issues impacting the ability of clients to obtain and retain employment.* These could include transportation innovations that assist clients in obtaining employment, seeding/standing up new training programs to meeting currently unmet employer need, pilot human resource innovations to address recruitment challenges while building pipelines into underserved communities or other workforce solutions that bridge the opportunity gap between job seekers with barriers to employment and the state's largest and/or growing industries

D. Funding Stream and Authority

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

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

Funds may be derived from a variety of sources.

II. Award Information

A. Available Funding and Number of Awards

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a grant request that does not exceed \$150,000. The number of grants awarded will be determined by the competitive process and available funding.

Awards are contingent on the receipt of disbursements from appropriate funding sources. Available funds may be severely impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak.

All contract awards are subject to the availability of funds and the execution of a Partnership Agreement and an Award Addendum that is acceptable to both the selected respondent and DLT.

B. Award Duration and Timeline

The performance period for the Real Pathways Partnerships established will be from **Fall 2020 through June 30, 2021**, with an option to renew for an additional two years. After receiving an initial grant award through this solicitation process, grantees may apply for additional funding to repeat successful activities, or to address other workforce needs within their respective industry or region. Additional funds will be awarded based on factors including available funds and partnership performance. Implementation Grant awards will be announced in September 2020, with grant activities to begin soon after.

Awardees of this grant round and newly approved partnerships will be eligible for additional funding opportunities available only to Real Pathways Partnerships.

C. Program Director

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

Robert Kalaskowski
RI Department of Labor and Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920-4407
E-mail: Robert.Kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov

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

D. Pre-Proposal Conference

A virtual pre-proposal conference will be held on Monday June 29, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EST. Interested parties must register in advance at robert.kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov.

All Conference-related materials and answers to questions addressed at the Pre-Proposal Conference or submitted via email will be posted to the Real Pathways RI website at <https://gwb.ri.gov/workforce-partner-resources> by Friday July 10, 2020.

E. Proposal Due Date and Time

Proposals must be submitted electronically (pdf proposal - budget submitted via excel) to Robert Kalaskowski at robert.kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov no later than **4:00 p.m. EST on Monday August 3, 2020**, to be considered. If the proposal submission is mailed it must also be received at the address listed on the Key Information Summary Sheet, by the closing date and time. **Proposals may not be hand-delivered nor submitted by fax.**

III. Eligibility and General Information

A. Eligible Lead Applicants

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

- Nonprofits
- Community-based organizations
- Education and training providers
- Other relevant partners that traditionally provide employment and training services to similar populations (example: Veterans, out-of-school youth, ex-offenders, low-income families, English Language learners) or regions of the state.

An entity may be a Lead Applicant of more than one Real Pathways Partnership and/or a Real Jobs Partnership; however they must speak to their capacity to manage multiple efforts in their proposal. Furthermore, it is the priority of the GWB to partner with a diverse and comprehensive network of providers to help as many Rhode Islanders as possible. For this reason, applicants should be advised that entities not currently receiving GWB funding may be prioritized over current partners

B. Required Partnership Structure

At a minimum, the following must be identified in the Implementation Grant Proposal and must demonstrate commitment to participating in the workforce solution:

- At least two organizations (including but not limited to: public, private, community-based, and non-profit agencies, training and education providers, and others) that serve a similar population with barriers to employment (ex: veterans, ex-offenders, non-English speakers) or region of the state with higher than average concentration of unemployment and/or poverty;
- At least two representatives from employers/industry (including but not limited to: employers in the same industry or with a similar workforce/talent need; representatives from a regional Chamber of Commerce, representatives from a trade/industry organization, a Real Jobs RI sector partner, a local or regional economic development agency, or a labor union)

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

C. Required Partner Roles

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

Lead Applicant

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

Convener

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

For the purposes of the Implementation Grant, the Lead Applicant may, but need not, be the Convener.

Fiscal Agent

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

For the purposes of the Implementation Grant, the Lead Applicant may, but need not, be the Fiscal Agent.

Strategic Partners

Strategic partner organizations may play whatever role is determined necessary to ensure the success of the proposed workforce solution, provided said role is explicitly described in the proposal. Activities could include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Partner will provide case management and connections to support services such as transportation, housing, and public assistance for clients as necessary;
- Partner will provide remediation and/or high school equivalency education for clients as necessary;
- Partner will provide ESL instruction as necessary;
- Partner will provide work readiness and essential skills instruction, contextualized if possible;
- Partner will provide occupational skills training in a high demand field as evidenced by labor market data and other appropriate sources;
- Partner will provide career-relevant support services such as access to professional clothing, mock interviews, and job coaching;
- Partner will serve as project manager for a workforce solution or systems investment that is unrelated to education and training.

Employer Partners

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

D. Training Activities and Training Providers

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

If, subsequent to proposal submission, it is determined that approval is required, DLT will work with such Real Pathways Partnerships and the regulatory entity on a case-by-case basis to address the approval process. Prior to the disbursement of grant funds, DLT reserves the right to request additional information about any Faculty or Training Provider.

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, the DLT permits and encourages the use of virtual and other distance-learning methods whenever possible and appropriate. However, if a training requires approval or certification from any state or national entity, such as training that will result in a national certificate or college credit, proof that virtual/distance learning is permitted by that entity will be required.

E. Leveraged Resources

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

F. Targeted Populations and/or Region

Real Pathways RI requires that applicants identify a targeted population and/or region that services will focus on:

- **Target Population:** Target populations include adults and youth with demonstrable barriers to employment including, but not limited to: veterans, homeless individuals, former offenders, individuals with disabilities, Unemployment Insurance claimants, low-income families, TANF recipients, long-term unemployed (i.e., greater than six months), older workers, individuals with a high school education or less; foster and other youth in state care; individuals facing behavioral and/or substance abuse issues, and individuals with limited English proficiency.
- **Region:** Target regions includes regions of the state with concentrations of poverty and/or unemployment that are above the statewide average. Region is a flexible term. It is not limited to geographic boundaries. Applicants have the flexibility to define a region, for example, by industry labor markets that are already known or understood, rough concentrations of populations (ex. 'South County', 'Providence Metro', 'Aquidneck Island'), commuter patterns or industry hubs. It can be across Local Workforce Development Areas ("LWDAs") and geo-political boundaries, and even incorporate multiple economic development areas.

G. Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

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

Costs that are not allowable from Real Pathways RI funds may be allocated as direct support or an in-kind donation of a Real Pathways Partnership member. Additional guidance on eligible and ineligible expenses will be provided if the grant is awarded.

IV. Proposal Format and Submission Information

A. How to Apply and Submission Requirements

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

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

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

The Proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative must be printed single-sided, use line spacing of at least 1.5 and 12-point font, have one-inch margins, use page numbers, and use tabs or another organizational method. The Proposal Narrative section may not exceed 15 pages. Charts may use single spacing and a 10-point font. Citations for specific data points should be included within the narrative as footnotes; no works cited page is required.

The proposal should be submitted in PDF format copy to Robert.kalaskowski@dlt.ri.gov. Pages should be the standard Letter size (8½” x 11”).

B. Cover Page

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

C. Table of Contents

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

D. Proposal Narrative

The narrative must use the headings outlined below and be no more than 15 pages. You may use the template provided in Appendix B.

- I. **Strategic Goals** [1 page or less]
 - a. Describe your Real Pathways Partnership's overarching strategy and the main goals of the workforce solution you are proposing. Please address:
 - i. Programmatic components and project activities.
 - ii. How the solution will address the unique workforce challenges and needs of the target population or region.
- II. **Target Population and/or Region** [1 page or less]
 - a. Identify the target population and/or region. How and why was it selected?
 - i. Provide data to support the selection of the target. For example, a proposal may provide data and other information describing the size and characteristics of the target population/region relative to the state of Rhode Island, including total number of individuals, employment/unemployment rates, income levels, and other pertinent facts which demonstrate the economic and employment challenges facing the specific population or region.
 - ii. Discuss how the target population and/or region has been adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and related economic challenges.
- III. **Assessment of Critical Workforce Challenges or Barriers to Employment** [2 pages or less]
 - a. Outline the critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment faced by the target population and/or region, and state which of those challenges the Partnership is targeting for this proposal. Such challenges can be evidenced by data (ex. 'According to US BLS data, lack of English language competency makes individuals X% more likely to be unemployed') or professional attestation (ex. 'Lack of transportation options impacted no fewer than 200 clients served by our collective programs in the past year.'). *It is not necessary to state all of the critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment, only the one that the Partnership is targeting. However, if a Partnership knows that there are multiple critical needs, it may strengthen the proposal by showing the Partnership's potential to collaboratively address these needs in the future.*
 - b. Provide data to show evidence of the employer partners' workforce and skills needs. This information could be obtained through varied collection methods, such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, roundtable discussions, etc. and should demonstrate that the needs of employer and industry partners helped inform the development of the proposal.
 - c. If applicable, describe whether the occupations that the Partnership is targeting are specific high-demand occupations or sets of occupations at different skill and salary levels. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Data and *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State* are two examples of sources.

IV. Real Pathways Partnership Members [2 pages or less]

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

V. Workforce Solution Plan [5 pages or less]

- a. **Workforce Solution Activities:** Describe the activities the Partnership will undertake to address the identified workforce challenges or barriers to employment facing the target population or region. Identify the number and type of participants (e.g. unemployed, underemployed) to be served under this solution. What strategies will be utilized? What evidence/experience informed the development of this solution? The Partnership member(s) responsible for oversight and/or implementation of each activity should be identified.
 - i. **If the proposed workforce solution involves occupational training:**
 1. **Recruitment Strategy:** Describe the partnership’s participant recruitment strategies. Will a specific partner fulfill this role? Are target groups identified? How will participants be screened? Did employer partners endorse the strategy?
 2. **Supportive Services:** Briefly describe any supportive services, if applicable, and how the supportive services contribute to the outcomes the partnership hopes to achieve.
 3. **Training Curriculum/Service Program (if applicable):** Identify the skills participants will gain, credentials or certifications to be awarded, length and/or hours of training, name of training provider, expected outcomes,

etc., for each training activity. You may attach a syllabus, course outline or course description, if applicable.

- a. Identify whether a training activity requires the approval of any regulatory or licensing entity. If so, please attach evidence of approval and/or steps taken to receive approval.
4. **Job Placement/Advancement:** Briefly describe job placement and/or advancement strategies and activities. Describe quantitatively the job placement or career advancement outcomes expected. Are employers in the Partnership committed to hiring or advancing participants?
- b. **Integration of Currently Available Resources:** If applicable, describe how the proposed Workforce Solution integrates, supplements, or enhances (or avoids duplication of or conflict with) services presently available within the current human service/education/workforce development network. (ex. 'Our workforce solution will provide an additional two months of childcare assistance for families if/when they pass income eligibility limits for the DHS Childcare Assistance Program.')
- c. **Applicability to Covid-19:** Describe how the proposal has been informed by the Covid-19 outbreak and its related impact on the state. This may include, but not be limited to:
 - i. The integration of virtual or distance learning consistent with recommend social distancing policies
 - ii. The focus on training participants for specific industries that are essential or important to the Covid-19 response
 - iii. Other revisions or adjustments to programming and service delivery as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak

VI. Partner Engagement and Growth [1 pages or less]

- a. Describe how strategic partners have participated in defining the critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment faced by the target population and/or region.
- b. Describes how employer partners' workforce and skills needs helped inform the development of the proposal.
- c. Describe plans to recruit additional partners, including employers.

VII. Capacity for Collaboration [1 pages or less]

- a. Describe how members of the Implementation Grant applicant group intend to work collaboratively with one another or have in the past.
- b. Describe any previous or existing partnership experience by members of the Implementation Grant applicant group.
- c. Describe any past or current work by members of the Partnership with the State of Rhode Island.

VIII. Organizational, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity [2 pages or less]

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

E. Budget and Budget Narrative

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

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

V. Proposal Review and Selection

A. Proposal Award Review Process

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

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

Strategic Goals

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

Target Population and/or Region

- Does the proposal provide clear definition of the target population and/or region to be served, and describe how and why it has been identified?
- Is sufficient data or information provided to demonstrate the economic and/or employment challenges facing the target population and/or region to be served?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that the target population and/or region has been adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and related economic challenges?

Assessment of Critical Workforce Challenges or Barriers to Employment

- Does the proposal clearly identify critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment for the target population and/or region to be served?
- Is sufficient data or evidence provided to demonstrate the critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment identified?

Real Pathways Partnership Members

- Is there a clear and cogent rationale for the selection of the Lead Applicant, Convener, Fiscal Agent and other partners?
- Does the Lead Applicant have the ability to fulfill its role?
- Is the Convener credible, objective, and does he or she have knowledge of the target population or region?

Workforce Solution Plan

- Does the planned workforce solution directly relate to the Partnership's goal, vision, and the identified critical workforce challenges or barriers to employment?
- Does the proposal adequately demonstrate how the program will enhance the employment prospects of participants?
- Does the proposal clearly describe the specific roles each partner will play in executing the plan?
- Does the proposal provide theory and evidence to support the rationale for the plan design?

Workforce Solution Plan (Cont'd)

- If the proposed workforce solution involves occupation training:
 - Does the proposal outline a clear and cohesive strategy for recruitment?
 - Do supportive services, if identified, complement the proposal and benefit the participants?
 - Does the proposal have a concrete strategy for job placement and/or advancement?
 - If applicable, is training activity approval attached?
- If applicable, is the workforce solution informed by the Covid-19 outbreak and its related impacts

Partner Engagement and Growth

- Are strategic partners sufficiently engaged in the implementation and operation of the workforce solution?
- Is there evidence that employers helped inform the development process?
- Is there a reliable mechanism for feedback from, and continued engagement of, partners?
- Does the proposal provide a clear and cogent plan to identifying and adding additional partners in the future?

Capacity for Collaboration

- Do any members of the Partnership have prior experience working with each other?
- Based on the proposal, is the evaluator confident the Partnership is capable of successfully developing and implementing the workforce solution?

Organizational, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity

- Have the Lead Applicant and Fiscal Agent demonstrated the administrative and fiscal capacity to properly and effectively manage grant funds and submit timely and accurate expense reports and meet program reporting requirements?
- Does the proposal include well-thought out and intentional action steps outlining how the Partnership is going to work collaboratively?

Budget and Budget Narrative

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

Other Factors

- Has the GWB received multiple proposals focused on similar population or region of the state?
- Are the proposed activities unique or novel?
- Do the proposed activities reflect recognized best practices?
- Has the applicant performed adequately on previous GWB-funded activities (if applicable)?
- Are the proposed activities scalable?
- Are there other compelling reasons to fund the proposal?

B. Proposal Award Selection Process

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

GWB may suggest that proposals be combined to maximize and advance efforts to aid the target population and/or region to be served.

Final approval for each grant awarded shall be determined by the Director of the Governor's Workforce Board, based on the recommendations of the Review Committee and taking into account other factors, such as funding availability, geographic distribution, industries served, and populations/regions served. If the Board receives a proposal focused on a region/population for which it has received no other proposals; that proposal may be prioritized over proposals focused on a region/population for which it has received multiple proposals, even if the latter receives a higher evaluation score than the former, provided the proposal is deemed otherwise adequate in meeting the responsibilities and expectations of this program.

Upon request, GWB may provide feedback on proposals that do not receive funding.

VI. Grant Administration and Reporting

A. Post-Award Procedure

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

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

The GWB will host a Grantee Orientation that all awarded Partnerships must attend.

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

B. Role of the Real Pathways RI Grant Advisor

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

C. Payment Options

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

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

D. Participant Data

All grantees must provide specific data about each participant enrolled in grant-funded activities. These data points include, but are not limited to: first and last name, address, Social Security number, level of educational attainment, and basic information about current employment status.

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

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

E. Performance Metrics

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

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

Each Partnership's performance will be publicly available.

Funding may be tied to the achievement of performance metrics.

F. Reporting Requirements

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

G. Comprehensive Plan

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

Real Pathways RI recognizes that it is crucial for the economic future of the State of Rhode Island to make strategic investments in the capacity of community partnerships to close the opportunity gap between job seekers with barriers to employment and the state's largest and/or growing industries. Having a well-functioning workforce network with identifiable intermediaries capable of collaboratively addressing the specific and unique systemic barriers to employment will bolster Rhode Island's economic growth.

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

H. Program Evaluation

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

I. Additional Funding

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

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

Requests for additional funding, or pitches, will be reviewed by a team of evaluators with final approval by the Executive Director of the Governor's Workforce Board, based on these criteria as well other factors, such as funding availability, geographic distribution, industries served, populations/regions served, and economic and workforce market conditions.

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

J. Right to Revoke Funding, Audit and Suspend Funds

GWB reserves the right to revoke Implementation Grant funding from the recipient entity of any grant and require the return of unspent funds if the goals and timelines consistent with the approved Award Addendum(s) are not met.

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

To download all appendices, please visit:

<https://gwb.ri.gov/workforce-partner-resources>