



RHODE ISLAND WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

SKILLS2COMPETE

Every Rhode Island worker should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one’s first two years of college-- to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the opportunity to obtain the basic skills needed to pursue such education.

A SKILLED WORKFORCE IS KEY TO FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY AND THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Did You Know...

- Rhode Island has an **untapped economic development resource** – the human capital of its low-skilled workers who can benefit from education and training to meet employer needs; fill quality jobs that earn a living-wage; and contribute to the economic health of the state.
- Middle-skill jobs, which require more than high-school, but less than a four year degree, make up the largest part of Rhode Island’s labor market, yet in 2007 only 37 percent of the state’s workers had the appropriate training for these jobs.
- Middle skill jobs in health care, hospitality and tourism, construction, green technologies, marine trades, and on-site information technology services cannot be outsourced, creating the need for readily available skilled employees to fill jobs within those industries.
- Middle-skill jobs provide good wages and career paths for Rhode Island workers. As workers acquire more education and skills training, their incomes increase. With increased income, tax contributions rise and the need for publicly-funded work supports decrease.
- Five Industry Partners have completed skill gap analyses funded by the Governor’s Workforce Board. Using this information, education and training programs can be tailored to meet the skill demands of specific industries and create career pathways for the workforce within that industry. Several Industry Partners are participating in the Industry Skills Development Initiative, which addresses job retention and skill building and increases awareness of career opportunities within their industries.
- The CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission will release a report in early 2010 making recommendations for strengthening CCRI’s role in preparing Rhode Islanders for high-demand jobs through certificate and associate degree programs.

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ADULT EDUCATION IS THE STARTING POINT FOR MANY RHODE ISLANDERS TO ADVANCE IN THE WORKFORCE

Did You Know...

- For almost 150,000 Rhode Island adults, the starting point to qualify for middle skill jobs is access to adult education - basic literacy skills, English language proficiency and/or a high school credential. Annual waiting list surveys show that 2,000 people are waiting for services at any one point in time with many waiting a year or more. GED testing centers and the External Diploma Program are experiencing increased demand particularly from unemployed and underemployed adults seeking a high school credential.
- The adult education system, administered by the RI Department of Education, is an integral part of Rhode Island's workforce development system. The Governor's Workforce Board's Strategic Plan, approved in early 2009, sets out goals and strategies for workforce development and, for the first time, integrates adult education into the total workforce development system.
- Adult education programs are helping students jump-start the development of job skills by contextualizing curricula - integrating workforce vocabulary and concepts into classroom teaching and linking with industry partners and employers.
- Standards for adult education programs are improving with funding based on performance outcomes. The Rhode Island Adult Education Professional Development Center at Rhode Island College is helping to improve the quality of adult education instruction.
- Several innovative, community-based programs help adult education students successfully transition to post-secondary education.
- Funds to support adult education programs in Rhode Island come from federal and state sources and currently total around \$11 million. Since 2006 there has been no significant increase for adult education. Federal funds have recently decreased creating a need to identify new resources to keep the system intact. An additional investment of state funds would help more adults receive services to become the skilled workers that RI employers need.

PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN RHODE ISLAND

Did You Know...

- A Green Technologies Industry Partner is being added to the existing industry sectors already designated by the Governor's Workforce Board.
- Industry Partners are pairing up with adult education programs to build basic industry knowledge into the adult education curriculum.
- Initiatives like the Newport Skills Alliance and the health care-oriented Skill Up are creating pathways for low-skilled workers to enter growing Rhode Island job markets and start on career ladders that will improve job skills, increase income and improve job satisfaction.
- The state's apprenticeship program is being reviewed by the Department of Labor and Training for possible restructuring.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$17 million in new funds for the state's workforce development system's One-Stop Career Centers and the two local workforce investment boards.