

## **Response from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:**

### **Adult Education Responses to Senate Questions of February 4, 2019**

#### 1. Adult Education Mission:

Adult Education will enable Rhode Island adults to acquire the basic skills necessary to function in today's society so that they can benefit from the completion of secondary and post-secondary education, enhanced family life, attain citizenship and participate in job training and retraining programs.

To deliver on this promise, RIDE identified three key strategic themes that guided the development of the recent 2018 Request for Proposal. These themes were informed by a combination of state and federal priorities – all geared towards positioning students for lifelong success.

RFP Priorities focused on Student Pathways: RIDE recognizes that to serve our adult students – all who bring their own unique strengths, passions, and challenges – to succeed in tomorrow's economy will require ensuring that all students have a pathway to lifelong success. These student pathways should result not only in successful educational skill gains, but also in a successful transition to postsecondary education and/or employment. This deep focus will also require services that offer immediate and flexible programming that is responsive to both each individual student's needs while also ultimately positioning them for jobs that meet employers' demands. RIDE has identified a series of RFP priorities in which providers can respond to, all aligned to putting a student on a pathway towards lifelong success.

The mission above was detailed in RIDE's 2018 RFP for adult education funding.

#### 2. Adult Education Program's Goals:

The primary goals for adult education are to,  
Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency;  
Support the educational and skill achievement of parents and family members to participate in the educational development of their children and improve economic opportunities for families;  
Assist immigrants and English learners in improving their English and math proficiency and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and  
Assist incarcerated individuals in strengthening their knowledge and skills to promote successful re-entry into society

Adult Education classes are designed to improve the basic academic skills of reading, writing, math and English language for adults who function below the post-secondary level.

GED® classes are designed to assist adults in passing the GED® Credential tests.

The goals above were detailed in RIDE's 2018 RFP for adult education funding.

#### 3. Organizational Charts showing where Adult Education falls and to whom the director of adult education reports:

See addendum.

4. Funding sources by Fiscal Years 2009, 2014, and 2019: WIA/WIOA; GWB/JDF; and General Revenue – Also added are DHS Project Opportunity and Federal Even Start funds (2009)

See addendum.

5. How does RIDE's Adult Education program interact now with GWB?

Since 2007, the Governor's Workforce Board has collaborated with the Rhode Island Department of Education to target the segment of the workforce that lacks the necessary Adult Basic Education and work readiness skills to compete in the modern economy. RIDE, on behalf of this interagency collaboration, utilizes available federal and state resources to support its network of adult education providers. Resources from the Job Development Fund are allocated to RIDE by the Governor's Workforce Board. In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, thirteen service providers are currently receiving Job Development grant funds to raise the education level of the Rhode Island workforce.

To allow the members of the Governor's Workforce Board to see what its strategic investment in its adult education priority represents, a fund-specific set of performance data is submitted by RIDE to the Governor's Workforce Board at mutually agreed upon frequency throughout the fiscal year.

Collaboration between RIDE, the Governor's Office and the Governor's Workforce Board has led to the establishment of key investment priorities

- Provision of Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and English as a Second Language (English for Speakers of Other Languages).
- Expansion of adult education that is contextualized and supports career pathways for youth and adults in Rhode Island's nine critical and emerging industries.
- Integration of adult education and hands-on technical training leading to academic and industry credentials for low-skilled current and former welfare recipients and other unemployed low-skilled adults
- Integration of pre- and post-release adult education services for the incarcerated.
- Expansion of transition to postsecondary education and training/apprenticeship programs that use dual or concurrent enrollment including rigorous Adult Secondary Education for those preparing for postsecondary education based on internationally benchmarked college and career readiness standards.

RIDE state staff are fully engaged partners on the Governor's Workforce Board Education and Employment Advisory Committee

This committee is comprised of diverse stakeholders who are charged with overseeing the implementation of various workforce investments and programs that align with the Governor's Workforce Board's comprehensive plan to ensure that all Rhode Island residents are prepared

for work, achieve academic proficiency and/or industry/academic credentials, obtain employment, and/or increase their earning potential.

6. % Entered Employment; % Improved/Retained Employment  
2015-2016 program year (under WIA employment outcomes): Out of the unemployed adults at entry, 46% got jobs, as measured in the second quarter after exiting the program. 54% retained their employment in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit.
7. % “Completed the course they set out to take”  
53% of all adult learners made a measurable skill gain. The primary goal of all adult learners who enter adult education programs is to improve their academic skills.
8. % Entering Higher Education  
The best information we have from Post-secondary is when it was an outcome for WIA, in 2013-2014, 395 adult learners entered postsecondary institutions after they exited from the program; this equaled 7% of the total enrollment.
9. % certificate or apprenticeship  
We started collecting industry certificates and apprenticeship information this year for GWB/JDF only.
10. Peak WAIT LIST; how many now; current educational level and services seeking:  
The highest the wait list has been is over 1,500 adults; it is currently at 1,217. Of those waiting, 350 are waiting for ABE instructional services (grades 1-8), and 867 are waiting for ESOL instructional services.
11. What causes enrollment fluctuation?  
The majority of enrollment fluctuation is caused by the increases and decreases in funding available. Federal funds were decreased due to sequestration in 2014 and state General Revenue and Job Development Funds have also been reduced from a high point in 2006. Through various efficiencies, including implementing the consortium model, enrollment has started to climb slowly since 2014.
12. Goals of students entering with less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade (94% of all students):  
RIDE allows local adult education providers to develop and administer their own student intake procedures, including which goal statements they collect from students. Programs typically attempt to serve students according to their authentic goals, which can include improving their literacy/language skills, getting a secondary credential or help with preparing for or training for a job/career. If students have goals that fall out of the purview of the program or are much longer term than the student’s abilities, staff likely work with them to relate their goals to literacy/work related ones that can be achieved in the short and long term.
13. 94% are 19 or older – goals of those students:

In seeking out adult education services, those students aged 19 or older are aware of their need for increased literacy, language skills or a secondary credential usually for a reason that could include getting a job or improving their employment prospects. Others seek these educational opportunities to improve the quality of their life and to generally increase their ability to participate in an increasingly literate society. For example, some students who are parents need improved literacy/language skills to be able to help their children with homework or otherwise participate in their child's education program. Also, more writing and digital literacy skills than ever are required in today's workplace.

14. % ESOL who have degrees in their countries

Out of 3,517 adult learners last year who attended school outside the United States, 727 had high school diplomas, 417 had some college, and 410 had postsecondary degrees. Counting the high school credential, that is 44%. Counting only those with postsecondary degrees, it is 12%.

Programs are working with these students on determining whether they are limited as to where they can work due to limited English. This is an area that is a focus of goal setting early on and also later when students transition out of the program or into an employment training opportunity within the program. Many programs assist students in having home country credentials translated into US equivalency at the outset of starting the program so that both the program and student can put a plan in place to identify next steps for participating in programming aligned to the home country credentials or another pathway altogether.

15. % who are not seeking employment or improvement in employment

RIDE does not track the percentage of students that come into programs to further their education with employment goals or not. It is the case that it depends on the life circumstances and ages of students to some degree, whether they hope or desire to gain employment/better employment as a result of participating in Adult Education classes.

As to the statement before the question, it may be more the case that this group is concerned about preserving the education component that would ensure that students with lower levels of literacy/language are not given an employment focus only, which would place them on a career pathway prematurely. If this is the case, their chances of progressing on that pathway is limited since they need the educational component to progress.

16. COMPARISON STATS TO NEW ENGLAND STATES

- a. Yes, the example is good; however, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade happens to be the Educational Functioning Level 4 which is unique because it contains three grade level equivalents, so to make a gain in that particular level, a student must move up from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in either reading or math.

What do students do after they make an educational gain? As has been mentioned earlier, students stay in their programs until they reach their personal academic, training, or employment goals. If a student's goal is to pass the GED, then they will stay until they are ready to test and pass successfully. If a student wants to enter a training program that has a minimum test score for entry, then they will stay until they reach that score. If a student wants to learn enough English to communicate better on the job and perhaps move up to a

higher position, then they will stay until they feel they have reached that goal. If a student wants to learn enough English to navigate our systems or help their children at school, then they will stay until they have reached that level of confidence and competence in English.

- b. RI = 94% of students enter with less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading or math level  
MA = 87%  
ME = 84%  
CT = 82%  
NH = 80%  
VT = 67% (there are far fewer ESOL students in Vermont)

- c. RI = 94% are 19 or older  
MA = 97%  
NH = 92%  
CT = 91%  
ME = 88%  
VT = 68% (Vermont Adult Education receives state funding to serve youth)

- d. Age Ranking by % Unemployment:

16-18 = 57%  
19-24 = 50%  
55+ = 46%  
25-44 = 43%  
45-54 = 39%

17. Statistics related to RI outcome measures (2017-2018):

- a. 53% made measurable skill gains – Federal WIOA target and state GWB target was 51%. Targets were met and exceeded (104%).
- b. 279 learners earned a GED credential – No Federal target yet (states are still collecting baseline data) – GWB target was 328 (85% of target was met).
- c. (and d.) We did not collect industry-recognized credentials separately from digital literacy credentials – 1,129 credentials in total last year. There is no federal credential target under WIOA – GWB target was 840, target was met and exceeded (134%).
- d. (see c.) Digital Literacy Credentials and industry-recognized credentials totaled 1,129 credentials.
- e. 1,238 learners (or 32% of those who exited) were employed in the second quarter after exit – No Federal Target yet (still collecting baseline data). The median earnings statewide were \$4,342 in quarter 2.
- f. 409 learners (or 31% of those who exited) were employed in the fourth quarter after exit – No Federal Target yet (still collecting baseline data)

18. # of apprentices.

We started tracking this information this year and do not yet have annualized data to report.

## 19. Relationship with organized labor

While RIDE does not collaborate directly with organized labor, local adult education programs funded by RIDE engage in robust partnerships with employers and their area One Stop Centers. RIDE encourages and incentivizes partnerships between adult education providers, postsecondary institutions, and industry/business partners. Partnerships with industry – including Real Pathways and Real Job Rhode Island partnerships – will ensure that students are receiving integrated educational training to help them receive the skills and postsecondary credentials for jobs that meet employers’ needs. Both forms of partnerships also present opportunities that are ripe for innovation, including, but not limited to the proposed “RI-BEST” model, based on a successful evidence-based model from Washington state that integrates adult education, post-secondary education, and career development services.

## 20. Relationship with DLT

RIDE state staff are fully engaged partners on the RI WIOA Interagency Workgroup team with DLT staff. The team is convened for the purpose of establishing common goals and objectives, improving access to comprehensive services, and enhancing career services through the cooperation, collaboration, and coordination of efforts between the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Rhode Island Governor’s Workforce Board, Labor and Training, Health and Human Services, both Local Workforce Development Boards and Rehabilitation Services.

WIOA Interagency Workgroup team member agencies are currently engaged in creating stronger and renewed partnerships for program alignment including intake, case management, assessment and data system integration between partners to allow for more efficient access to high-quality services.

Agencies are working to be more effective, particularly in the development of a formal referral system, which builds on the excellent partnerships that exist, allowing for better documentation and tracking of educational and employment successes. The team has begun to identify gaps in the services needed to fulfill the requirement of a comprehensive and seamless one-stop customer experience.

RIDE has a long-standing contract with DLT for TAA/TRADE services for those who have become unemployed due to work being traded to areas outside of the United States. RIDE-funded adult education programs serve eligible TRADE Adjustment Assistance (TAA) clients who are in need of adult basic education, GED preparation, or English as a second language classes in order to be eligible for employment. Eligible TRADE customers are referred to adult education programs by DLT TRADE counselors.