

From Initiative to System: Providence R.I.S.E.S. (Relevant Integrated Skills and Education Strategy)

Overview

In November 2007, the Providence Poverty, Work and Opportunity Taskforce called for the expansion of sector-based career pathways for low-skill, low-wage workers as one of several key strategies intended to increase the ability of low-income families in Providence to improve their economic status. The report also made several other interconnected recommendations including, but not limited to, the following:

- Develop a partnership with the Office of Adult Education at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to expand the availability of high quality adult education and training programs for Providence residents.
- Increase access to work support programs that help low-wage families meet their basic needs and move towards financial security.
- Create affordable financial services for low-wage residents and increase access to financial education and counseling services.

To determine how to best organize workforce development and adult education efforts to achieve these goals, the Mayor's Office, in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education and the United Way of Rhode Island, co-convened a series of exploratory meetings with key industry and adult education leaders to gather strategic insights on policy and service gaps that need to be addressed.

The results of these meetings along with research-based best practices nationwide have supported the development of a high impact alignment and capacity-building strategy, called Providence R.I.S.E.S (Relevant, Integrated Skill and Education System), for helping low-income and unemployed Providence residents develop skills in demand by local employers. This strategy is based on the following theory of change:

"Helping the urban poor participate in a competitive economy is a fundamental strategy for alleviating poverty. Organizing workforce development efforts around key industry sectors is a high impact approach to helping low-income adults develop skills that are aligned with the needs of the local economy."

This includes:

- *Aligning workforce development, education, economic development and social service systems in a way that is responsive to prevailing employment trends to create a system through which job seekers (at all skill levels) and workers can progress through education or training that prepares them for jobs in high growth industries.*
- *Ensuring that families have access to a full range of essential economic support to help them build economic self-sufficiency.*
- *Helping families build financial literacy so they can stabilize their finances and build wealth.*

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Implementation of this strategy will result in the following:

- 1) **A Seamless “Career pathways” System for Providence:** *Career pathways* is a term for a series of connected, contextualized education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific high-growth industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Key features of this approach include:
 - a. An intensive work readiness and career exploration program that will help participants transition or “on-ramp” into a career pathway. The “on-ramp” will integrate several key work readiness components to help participants explore and identify career paths that make sense for them while simultaneously accessing contextualized adult education, such as literacy, math, computer and soft skills, based on their skill and literacy levels. On-ramp graduates will go on to participate in contextualized adult education and skills training for their chosen career path.

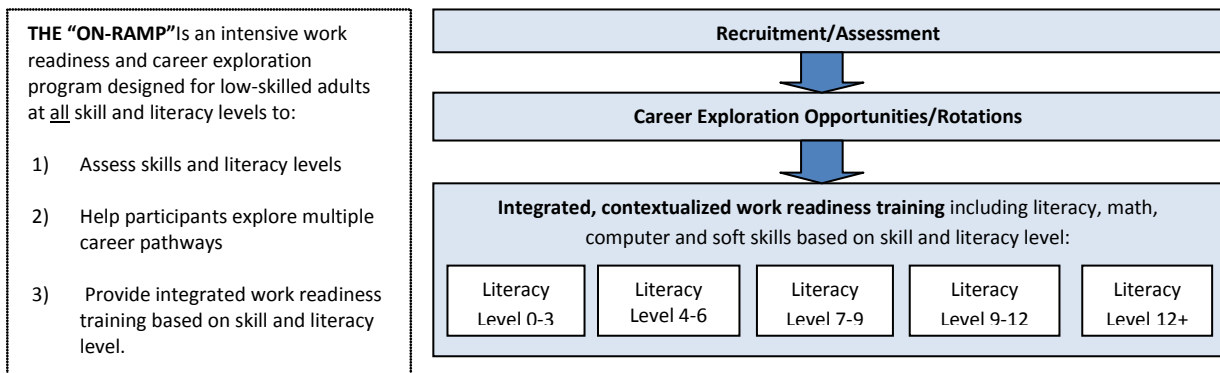


Chart A: Providence RISES On-Ramp

- b. **Integrated, Contextualized Adult Basic Education and Occupational Skills Training:** A core component of the Providence R.I.S.E.S. initiative will be a coordinated and cohesive system of contextualized adult basic education and occupational skills training for each of the targeted sectors. Unlike many programs, basic literacy, math and computer skills will not be a prerequisite for participation this training. Rather adult basic education and ESL for all skill levels will be imbedded within the skills training and contextualized to a specific career path and job so that participants can access training that is appropriate to their current skill level. Upon completion, participants can link directly to appropriate jobs, internships and/or apprenticeships in one of the targeted industries or continue training and increase their skills. Finally, the curriculum will be “chunked” into clear steppingstones that are recognized by employers (e.g., specific certificates with increased job responsibilities and higher pay) and articulate to academic and career advancement. This approach focuses on short-term, academic steps for students and early successes in these steps are thought to increase long-term progression.
 - c. **Upgrade Training and Education.** Another component of Providence R.I.S.E.S. will be ongoing access to relevant, market driven training and education so that workers, with demonstrated skills and work experience, can continue upgrade or transfer their skills

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enabling them to advance on a career pathway or transfer relevant skills to other sectors.

- 2) **Work and Housing Supports:** Providence R.I.S.E.S. will also provide a centralized point of entry to work and housing supports – such as child care subsidies, health insurance, Section 8 public housing, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRRP), Food Stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Family Independence Program. These programs, which are critical resources for working families, have a proven impact on long-term job retention and asset accumulation. Providence R.I.S.E.S. will help increase the number of eligible families who access these supports by developing a community-based, on-line benefits access system that will streamline the screening and enrollment process and enroll families in the full range of work support programs for which they are eligible.
- 3) **Affordable Financial Services and Financial Education:** The Providence R.I.S.E.S. model includes ensuring the availability of a range of financial services products, offered through banking partners, and tailored to the needs of low-wage workers. In addition, there will be access to financial education and counseling, in cooperation with banking partners that includes effective and culturally/linguistically appropriate financial literacy training for adults in Providence in adult basic education and ESL classes.

The attached diagram shows how all of the components fit together.

It is important to note that this is not a program but rather a strategy that will align and integrate initiatives that are already in place and build the capacity to close gaps. Through partnerships and collaboration, the City will reduce fragmentation and create a coordinated, seamless career pathways system by aligning existing adult education and skills training initiatives in Providence and supporting capacity building efforts to address gaps. Emphasis will be placed on building the capacity of organizations to serve very low-skilled workers and aligning initiatives that are providing contextualized adult basic education and skills training for high-demand jobs and engaging in sector-based partnerships to support placement of participants in jobs, internships and/or apprenticeships, as applicable. Providence R.I.S.E.S. will initially focus on the development of pathways for several high growth industries: construction, advanced manufacturing, green jobs, healthcare, hospitality and administrative/IT jobs.

Over the long-term, it is anticipated that this initiative will enable more low-skill adults to achieve the threshold level of at least one year of post-secondary education and training with a credential resulting in a job in a high growth industry. The impetus for this outcome was research conducted by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, called the “Tipping Point” research, which found that attending college for at least one year and earning a credential provides a substantial boost in earnings for adults with a high school diploma or less. It is also consistent with the vision of the Skills2Compete Campaign which advocates that:

“Every U.S. 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

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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.”

President Barack Obama has reinforced this goal by calling on all Americans, in his 2009 State of the Union address, to complete at least one year of post-secondary school or career training.

Rationale

The Providence R.I.S.E.S. initiative is intended to be more comprehensive than most career pathway initiatives in that it is designed to move very low skilled workers or workers with limited English proficiency onto the “pathway” immediately by integrating contextualized adult basic education right from start rather than requiring a minimum level of basic literacy as a pre-requisite for participation. It also integrates both “on-ramp” services and work and housing supports as needed and ultimately offers a customizable path for residents at any skill level to access as appropriate. Three large-scale, nationally-recognized studies that have shown that this approach improves the economic outcomes of low-skilled, low-income adults.ⁱ Outcomes have included increased earnings, increased college attendance, greater employment rates and reduced use of welfare benefits.

In addition, demographic data¹ coupled with an informal survey of adult education and training programs indicate that there is a significant population that could benefit from a well designed career pathways system:

- Forty-three percent (43% or 56,536 out of 132,709) of the total population in Providence age 16 or older, is not enrolled in school and has no post-secondary education.
- Seventy-five percent of this group (75% or 40,786) earn less than \$25,000 a year, eight percent (8% or 4,759) are unemployed and twenty-eight percent (28% or 16,044) have not gone beyond the 9th grade in school.
- In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 11% of the population age 16 or older living in Providence households is lacking *Basic* prose literacy skills.²
- An informal survey of adult education and training providers indicates that the current number of slots available for adult education and skills training in one of the targeted industry sectors is less than 2,000 slots annually.

Providence residents, age 16 or older who are not enrolled in school and have no post-secondary education by educational attainment and work status.

¹ All demographic data in this document, unless otherwise noted, are three-year averages from the American Community Survey.

² Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Please note: Those lacking in *Basic* prose literacy skills include those who scored *Below Basic* in prose and those who could not be tested due to language barriers.

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	Civilian Employed, at Work				Civilian Employed not at Work				Unemployed				Not in the Labor force ³				
Education Attainment (Grade Completed)	16-24	25-54	55+	Total	16-24	25-54	55+	Total	16-24	25-54	55+	Total	16-24	25-54	55+	Total	TOTAL
0-4	357	2,255	340	2,952	0	105	0	105	0	222	97	319	153	1109	1778	3040	6416
5-6	260	1,779	360	2,399	0	0	0	0	0	426	32	458	93	584	1038	1715	4572
7-8	189	1,273	173	1,635	0	30	0	30	0	375	98	473	158	966	1794	2918	5056
9-12	849	3,715	827	5,391	0	373	61	434	264	1,036	21	1,321	1102	2465	3202	6769	13915
Grad	2,087	10,102	1,482	13,671	0	658	152	810	622	1,406	160	2,188	634	4057	5217	9908	26577
Total	3,742	19,124	3,182	26,048	0	1166	213	1,379	886	3,465	408	4,759	2140	9181	13029	24350	56536

In addition, demographic data shows that approximately 66% of residents who have less than a 9th grade education, speak English “not at all” or “not well”. Because there were a large number of non-respondents to this question, it is also relevant to note that only 14% of residents with less than a 9th grade education said that they spoke English “well” or “very well”. This clearly implies the any career pathway designed to serve adults with lower literacy levels will need to incorporate English language literacy.

Providence residents, age 16 or older who are not enrolled in school and have no post-secondary education by educational attainment and English language ability.

Education Attainment (Grade Completed)	Not At All	%	Not Well	%	Very Well and Well	%	No response	%	Total
0-4	2253	35.1%	2130	33.2%	1004	15.6%	1029	16.0%	6416
5-6	1655	36.2%	2222	48.6%	223	4.9%	472	10.3%	4572
7-8	597	11.8%	1740	34.4%	1009	20.0%	1710	33.8%	5056
9-12	893	6.4%	2256	16.2%	4237	30.4%	6529	46.9%	13915
Grad	939	3.5%	3123	11.8%	8968	33.7%	13547	51.0%	26577
Total	6337	11.2%	11471	20.3%	15441	27.3%	23287	41.2%	56536

Criteria for Selecting Targeted Sectors

The sectors targeted for the initial Providence R.I.S.E.S. effort were selected based on the following criteria:

- Existing or expected demand for entry level employment.
- The opportunity for advancement.
- The opportunity to leverage American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds or other resources to support efforts to develop a career pathways system.

³ Includes all people 16 years old and over who are not classified as members of the labor force. This category consists mainly of students, housewives, retired workers, seasonal workers interviewed in an off season who were not looking for work, institutionalized people, and people doing only incidental unpaid family work (less than 15 hours during the reference week)."

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- The ability to sustain an initiative after ARRA stimulus funds is no longer available.
- The ability to leverage other funds to support efforts.

All of the targeted sectors were selected from the list of high growth sectors identified by the Governors Workforce Board⁴.

Existing or Expected Demand for Entry Level Employment

One of the fundamental criteria used to select the targeted sectors was evidence of existing or expected demand for entry level employment with the possibility of advancement. In the absence of city level data, industry projections for 2006-2016 from the Department of Labor and Training were used to help determine the existing and expected demand for employment for each sector. Since Rhode Island is relatively small geographically size, state level data offers the best available picture of expected demand and high growth sectors. According the recently revised state plan for workforce investment, Rhode Island employment is expected to increase by over 47,000 jobs during the 2006-2016 projection period. Employment in 2016 is projected to reach 570,461, an increase of 47,550 (9.1%) from the 2006 employment level. Much of this growth is attributed to the increased demand for the products and services provided by the Health Care & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Educational Services; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; and Finance & Insurance sectors.

Within these sectors, the following occupations are most likely to be entry level and are expected to have the largest number of job openings across Rhode Island:

Rhode Island High Demand Entry Level Occupations 2006-2016	
Occupational Title Loosely Organized By Sector⁵	Annual Openings
Cooks, Fast Food	83
Dining Room & Cafeteria Attendants & Bartender Helpers	95
Restaurant Cooks	113
Dishwashers	114

⁴ The initial list included health care, financial services, biotechnology/biomanufacturing, construction, advanced manufacturing, marine technologies, hospitality/tourism, information technology, green jobs and retail.

⁵ Many occupations apply to more than one sector. For example, a hospital may employ cafeteria attendants and dishwashers or a hotel might employ a retail salesperson in their gift shop. Please note, that this data was loosely grouped to get a general sense of expected demand for a sector. This grouping does not eliminate cross-over and is not meant to be interpreted as a formal quantification of sector employment demand.

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Rhode Island High Demand Entry Level Occupations 2006-2016 (Cont'd)

Occupational Title Loosely Organized By Sector	Annual Openings
Bartenders	150
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	181
Food Preparation Workers	195
Combined Food Prep and Serving Workers	285
Cafeteria and Concession Counter Attendants	361
Waiters and Waitresses	754
TOTAL "HOSPITALITY"	2331
Counter and Rental Clerks	81
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	125
Customer Service Representatives	324
Cashiers	583
Retail Salespersons	632
TOTAL "RETAIL"	1745
Medical Secretaries	88
Personal & Home Care Aides	114
Home Health Aides	176
Nursing Aides, Orderlies & Attendants	257
TOTAL "HEALTHCARE"	635
Secretaries, except legal, medical and executive	109
Receptionists and Information Clerks	174
General Office Clerks	314
TOTAL "ADMINISTRATIVE"	597
Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters	75
Carpenters	159
TOTAL "CONSTRUCTION"	234
Child Care Workers	224
Teacher Assistants	122
Tellers	146
Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	83
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services	107
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor Trailer	107
Landscaping & Grounds keeping Workers	116
Social and Human Services Assistants	160
Laborers, Freight, Stock and Materials Movers	203
Security Guards	90
Janitors & Cleaners	212
TOTAL "OTHER"	1256

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There is also expected to be demand for more advanced positions as follows:

Rhode Island High Demand Non-Entry Level Occupations 2006-2016	Annual Openings
Registered Nurses	453
Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses	85
Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks	190
Accountants and Auditors	151
Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	103
First-line supervisors, office and administrative support workers	122
Computer Systems Analysts	99
Secondary School Teachers, except special and vocational education	166
Elementary School Teachers, except special education	149
First-line supervisors, retail sales	154
Sales Representatives	147
Pharmacy Technicians	79

In addition, the Department of Labor and Training has identified several “*Hot Jobs*” for the next 7 years. Hot Jobs are the state’s high-growth, high-demand and high-wage jobs. They are considered to be jobs that are projected to:

- 1) Grow at rates above the state average rate of 9.1 percent;
- 2) Generate at least fifty jobs openings each year; and
- 3) Pay wages above the private sector state average wage of \$39,827.

Together, these jobs will account for nearly 1,800 job openings each year, or one out of every ten job openings expected to occur during the projection period. Jobs on this list include:

Health Care

- Registered Nurses
- Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses

Construction

- Carpenters
- Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters
- Construction Laborers
- First-Line Supervisors Construction Trades

Administrative/IT

- Executive Secretaries & Administrative Assistants
- Computer Systems Analysts
- Computer Support Specialists
- Computer Software Engineers, Applications
- Management Analysts

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Financial

- Accountants & Auditors
- Financial Managers
- Personal Financial Advisors

Education

- Elementary School Teachers
- Middle School Teachers

Opportunity to Leverage American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funds

The second criteria concerned the relative opportunity within a sector to leverage American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to support efforts to develop a career pathways system. An initial analysis of the impact of ARRA funds⁶ on entry level job creation and training and education opportunities indicates that there are several areas where entry level jobs will be created including:

- 1) Construction jobs in highway, transit, public housing and affordable housing
- 2) Weatherization jobs (green jobs)
- 3) Child Care
- 4) Indirect Jobs such as administrative jobs to support construction work or green jobs work or food service (as people go back to work and begin re-spending)

Targeted Sectors

Using this information along with qualitative assessment of the other criteria, five sectors/job areas were chosen for initial focus:

- 1) **Construction:** State-level employment demand projections indicate that there will continue to be annual demand for construction laborers, carpenters, pipefitters, plumbers and steamfitters. Most construction jobs created as a result of ARRA investments will likely go to dislocated workers who have lost their jobs within the last two years. However, there is still an opportunity to create demand for Providence residents to fulfill construction jobs through policy incentives such as First Source and the City's use of apprenticeship utilization requirements.
- 2) **Green jobs:** The term "green jobs" is still relatively undefined and does not necessarily align with a particular industry sector. However, initial analysis indicates that due to an increasing desire to reduce energy dependence, there is a growing trend towards "greener" construction methods, energy and electrical systems and energy conservation. Therefore, it is expected that there will be increasing demand for workers trained or re-trained in "green" skills. Of most relevance to Providence R.I.S.E.S. are weatherization efforts and retrofitting of residential, municipal and institutional buildings that will most likely to be funded with ARRA investments. There are currently very few people trained weatherization and/or retrofitting workers in Rhode Island.

⁶ Taken from the "Guide to Entry –Level Jobs and Training and Education Opportunities for Making Connections Communities" written by Sarah Griffen on behalf of the Casey Family Foundation.

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- 3) **Healthcare:** State-level employment demand projections indicate that there will continue to be a high annual demand for health care positions ranging from medical secretaries, to nurses aides and home health aides. It is also possible that ARRA funding being administered through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to move medical records online will create demand for data entry workers.
- 4) **Hospitality:** State-level employment demand projections indicate that there will continue to be high demand for entry level hospitality workers particularly for food service and housekeeping and there are several existing hospitality related education and training programs in place to build upon.
- 5) **Administrative Jobs/IT:** State-level employment demand projections indicate that there will be high demand for entry level administrative and clerical workers across sectors. Data also show high demand for more advanced opportunities in this area. Second, analysis of the flow of ARRA funding indicates that administrative jobs will be created to support sectors where there has been significant ARRA investment such as construction and green jobs. In addition, DLT projects that there will be several high demand jobs in computer technology. All in all, it will be important to monitor the opportunities that exist for both administrative and informational technology jobs and to ensure that there are appropriate pathways developed.

There are also two additional sectors that show promise:

- 1) **Child Care/Early Education:** While the child care industry is currently struggling due to a high level of unemployment in the State coupled with a subsequent loss of child care, there is definitely an immediate need to train the existing workforce. Specifically, there are new rules⁷ requiring teachers and teacher's assistants to hold higher levels of academic credentials. This is expected to create a large demand within the existing workforce for professional development, education and training but it will most likely not be a source of new jobs.⁸ In addition, the state is currently piloting a state-funded Pre-K program that could eventually expand statewide. Should this happen there will be a significant shortage of qualified staff for these programs and a huge need to develop a workforce to support the growth of this initiative.
- 2) **Retail:** State level employment demand data show that there will be demand for a variety of entry level retail jobs and some supervisor positions. However, due to the current economic decline, it is unclear whether an investment in retail career paths would be prudent. It will be important to verify the significance of this sector when the 2008-2018 projections are released.

	Existing or	Opportunities	Opportunity to	Sustainability,	Ability to
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⁷ Early education programs are facing increasing standards across the board. To achieve the highest quality level, the state's new quality rating system, BrightStars, requires teachers to hold a BA in Early Childhood Education and teaching assistants to hold a Child Development Associates credential. In addition, similar regulations are pending from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) for a program to be approved by RIDE as a pre-school. And starting October 2011 all Head Start classrooms must have a teacher with a minimum of a BA in Early Childhood Education.

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	expected demand for <u>entry level employment</u>	for Advance-ment	leverage (ARRA) funds	post ARRA	leverage other funds
Health Care	High (per state projections)	High	Low	High	High
Hospitality	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Low
Construction	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Low
Green Jobs	Low except for weatherization and electronic recycling	Moderate	High (weatherization)	High	High
Child Care	Low	Low	Moderate	Medium	High
Administrative	High	High	Moderate to High	High	Low
Retail	High	Low	Low	Low	Low

Existing Training or Education Systems to Leverage or Build Upon

Another key criterion not mentioned above evaluates the training and education capacity in Providence and the ability to leverage the existing system to create a pathways system. An informal review of existing training and education programs related to each of the targeted sectors shows both existing capacity that could be leveraged for this initiative as well as gaps that need to be filled. The analysis includes all existing adult education and training programs that have the capacity for or already offer integrated, contextualized adult education. Information was collected on each program's capacity, target population, career paths options, cost and literacy level required for participation. A matrix with all of the information collected is attached. In general, the analysis indicated the following:

1) *Training and education capacity is low compared to the need and only a few programs are training adults with lower literacy levels for occupations:* The majority of the programs for career paths in the targeted sectors require that adults have at least a 7th grade reading level to start the program. The only programs that enroll adults with less than a 7th grade reading level are:

- ***Building Futures***, a program of the Providence Plan that offers training in electrical, plumbing and carpentry for adults with at least a 5th grade literacy level. A training program in green construction is under-development. The program serves approximately 40 people annually.
- ***Dorcas Place*** offers a Hospitality track in its Career Academy that trains approximately 40 people per year in housekeeping, food prep and hotel customer service. There is no minimum literacy level for participation.
- ***Genesis Center*** offers a Culinary Arts program that trains approximately 36 people per year in a variety of culinary arts ranging from dishwashing to line cooks. A 4th grade literacy level is required and no additional adult education is provided as a part of the program.
- The ***Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Adult Education*** in partnership with various community organizations (***Dorcas Place, Groundworks Providence, Goodwill and Genesis Center***) is offering contextualized adult education and training programs in green cleaning, landscaping, electronics recycling, home health and other health care professions

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for persons eligible for RI Works that have less than a 6th grade education. The program is expected to start May 2009.

- 2) ***There are very few programs that provide integrated, contextualized adult education:*** Many programs have literacy requirements for participation and do allow participants to begin skills training until they have achieved the required level. Given the success of integrated, contextualized adult education in fast tracking skill development, there is a strong opportunity to build the capacity of organizations already using this approach to adult education and to encourage other organizations to move in this direction.

The Strategic Role of the Pathways to Opportunity Office

As mentioned earlier, this is not a program but rather a strategy that will align and integrate initiatives that are already in place and build the capacity to close gaps. This is possible because of a unique partnership between the Mayor's Office and a wide array of government and community leaders that arose out of the Poverty, Work and Opportunity Task Force. The Task Force was created through an Executive Order by Mayor David N. Cicilline in 2007 to address issues of poverty and work opportunity in Providence. As a result of its work the Taskforce recommended a series of strategies to the Mayor to reduce poverty and increase opportunity for low-income families in Providence. In response, the Mayor created the Pathways to Opportunity Office and asked that members of the Taskforce and other leaders continue their participation as partners by working to align relevant agendas and work of their organizations around shared priorities and strategies. The Pathways to Opportunity Office serves as a coordinator, catalyst and triage point for connecting and integrating the work across multiple organizations and the city. Because of this unique alignment, the Office is able to promote a common Providence R.I.S.E.S. model and provide input to program design, engage and align existing initiatives and identify and align potential funding – all ensuring a more systemic impact.

The Providence R.I.S.E.S. strategy is a strong example of how this partnership can be leveraged for greater systemic impact. It was intentionally designed to align closely with and influence the development of several existing and pending initiatives around a common strategy and model including:

Existing or Pending Initiatives

- ***Governor's Workforce Board Industry Partnerships:*** Providence R.I.S.E.S. is purposely aligned with the Governor's Workforce Board strategic plan so that it can be fully supported by the local Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Board. Central to the plan are the development of several industry partnerships designed to be powerful alliances among key partners and stakeholders that include education and training organizations, community-based organizations and the business community. The Industry Partnerships collaborate on strategies to reduce and eliminate identifiable skill gaps in the following high-growth, high-wage areas:
 - Health Care
 - Financial Services
 - Biotechnology
 - Construction
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Marine Technologies
 - Hospitality/Tourism

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- Information Technology
- ***US Conference of Mayors/Walmart Foundation Initiative:*** The City of Providence, with the Apeiron Institute for Sustainable Living as its lead community partner, has received a grant of \$372,500 from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Walmart Foundation to create entry and mid-level green job bridge training programs reflective of industry demand in Providence. The pilot program will include an “on-ramp” for residents that will include contextualized literacy training to prepare residents to enter skills training at one of two levels as well as a “Whole Home Health, Energy Efficiency, and Green Construction” skills training program that will lead to placement in entry-level jobs; or entry into an extensive technical training program being coordinated by Apeiron in partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island. The program is expected to train a total of 20 residents in green literacy and 40 residents in green job skills, with 12 residents moving into advanced technical training and 25 residents securing employment in green industry.
- ***Transitional Jobs Program:*** The City of Providence has received \$100,000 in resources from the Governor’s Workforce Board to match pending Federal funds to launch and pilot a Transitional Jobs program. The demonstration seeks to achieve a 50% reduction of the current three year recidivism rate of 62% among those returning to targeted City of Providence neighborhoods from prison over the next five years by piloting a Transitional Jobs program. Transitional Jobs are wage-paid, time-limited employment opportunities that combine real work, skill development and supportive services to rapidly and successfully transition persons into the labor market. Within the Transitional Jobs component of the demonstration, approximately 50 individuals will be served. The program will also include discharge planning, community based case management, housing, and other services as needed.
- ***Providence Pathways to Employment Initiative:*** The Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Board, the Providence School Department, the Office of Mayor Cicilline, and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Office of Adult and Career and Technical Education) have partnered to develop and implement a 36-month pilot initiative designed to considerably expand the capacity of career and technical education programs to serve primarily out-of-school youth and young adults. Participation in the program will result in stackable certifications and “gateway skill set” development for approximately 250-300 out-of-school youth, young-adult, and adult job seekers within the critical or emerging sectors Construction and Information Technology.
- ***Making Connections Providence:*** This year the City of Providence and John Hope Settlement House assumed leadership of Making Connections Providence (MCP), a community change effort driven by partnerships, resident leadership and data. To complete this transition over the next year, MCP will focus on integrating and aligning its work with the Mayor’s Pathways to Opportunity Initiative. Specifically, its work in 2009 will focus on:
 - 1) Expanding the workforce pipelines to include on-ramps that provide opportunity for low-literacy residents; particular within green jobs, construction and healthcare. This will include contextualized literacy programs, transitional jobs for the re-entry

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population and an immigrant on-ramp to healthcare careers.

2) Connecting the on-ramps to existing and new sector-based career pathways work.

3) Establishing an on-line benefits program in 2009.

4) Increasing the amount of Earned Income Tax Credit claimed by the MCP population.

5) Launching a Bank On Providence initiative with six financial institutions to offer new lending products that are more appropriate for low income families.

- **Skill Up Rhode Island:** Over the past several years, the United Way of Rhode Island has been working to bring together nationally recognized job training specialists with selected employers to create exciting workforce partnerships to provide job skills to low skilled workers. Skill Up has been recognized nationally for its cutting edge approach to labor force development.
- **Bank on Providence:** The City of Providence, in partnership with local financial institutions, is working on a campaign that will help families make better use of financial services to convert their wages into wealth, with an initial focus on connecting qualified households to appropriate bank accounts. An initial set of banking products geared for low income families is expected to be launched in Fall 2009.
- **Online Benefits Access Initiative:** Several partners, including the United Way and Making Connections Providence, are working with the State to chose and implement an on-line benefits access program that will streamline the screening and enrollment process and enroll families in the full range of work support programs for which they are eligible.

Potential Opportunities

- **The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):** There are several possibilities to leverage funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for building infrastructure and building out the Providence R.I.S.E.S. concept. For example, it may be possible to partner with the state to apply for the Department of Labor competitive green jobs to create infrastructure for a career ladder program in green jobs.
- **Career Pathway Innovation Fund:** The Department of Labor has proposed a new \$135 million Career Pathways Innovation Fund, to replace the existing Community-Based Job Training Program (funded at \$125 million in 2009). This fund will administer competitive grants to individual or groups of community colleges that focus explicitly on establishing career pathway programs. These programs have a clear sequence of coursework, multiple entry and exit points to accommodate learners at different levels, and often include links to basic services.
- **United Way Financial Stability Initiative:** The United Way of Rhode Island has recently released an RFP to grant funds to organizations seeking to help individuals and families achieve greater financial stability for by providing services such as basic financial education, tax preparation services, credit counseling, asset coaching, budgeting, establishing bank accounts, money

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management, and debt reduction.

- ***Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (FSET):*** The Food Stamp Employment and Training program (FSET), supports employment and training services for food stamp participants that meet certain requirements. There is a possible opportunity to leverage FSET funds along with other funding streams to help support workforce development efforts serving eligible food stamp recipients.
- ***Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds:*** The City of Providence provides annual CDBG grants to programs or initiatives that address a wide range of unique community development needs. It is possible for the City to align some of its funding so that it directly supports work falling within the Providence R.I.S.E.S. model.

Next Step

To move this strategy forward it will be important to form a coordinating entity that connects and aligns all of the initiatives around this strategy. The coordinating entity should be comprised of key leaders and decision makers, be demand driven and be enabled to:

- Align and connect initiatives
- Inform the design and development of initiatives
- Identify and leverage collective funding opportunities
- Set goals and progress measures
- Measure impact

ⁱ A Review of Research and Practice on Integrating Adult Basic Education and Occupational Training conducted for the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council in 2006 summarized three major studies as follows:

- The National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies showed that a “mixed strategy” combining basic education and training based on individual needs and emphasizing holding out for jobs that paid beyond minimum wage produced a 25 percent increase in earnings (\$5,000), an impact that was sustained over five years of follow-up (Hamilton, 2002; Martinson & Strawn, 2002).
- An evaluation of the Job Corps program, which combined basic skills and vocational education in an intensive residential program for out-of-school youth, found that enrollees earned an average of 15 percent (\$1,300) more than individuals in a matched comparison group. Enrollees were also twice as likely to attend college, had greater rates of employment and reduced use of welfare benefits.
- An evaluation of the Center for Employment and Training in San Jose, California—which uses a mixture of basic skills, vocational training, support services and job search activities—showed that participants sustained annual earnings gains of more than \$3,000, representing a 40 percent increase, compared with results for a control group.
- Additional positive effects of a mix of basic education and occupational training were reported in smaller-scale evaluations in Massachusetts and in Washington State.