

ENHANCED REAL JOBS RI

The Governor proposes to use \$40.0 million, including \$10.0 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) in FY2023, to enhance the Real Jobs Rhode Island platform initiative representing a direct response to the economic impact of the pandemic. The proposal would focus on providing services to individuals facing unemployment, communities of color and low-income communities, small businesses, and industries severely affected by the Covid-19 health emergency and subsequent negative economic impacts.

Under the proposed model, funding would be directed to providing career readiness programming, job-related basic skills education (including digital skills), supportive services, financial literacy and coaching, and workforce development training for members of communities hit hardest by Covid-19 and businesses (particularly small business) within industries most impacted by the pandemic. Learning from and expanding upon the Back to Business initiative, this enhanced investment will support training, basic skills education, and wraparound services to ensure that those Rhode Islanders reentering employment will do so with new skills and the capacity to succeed, while also providing the state's employers with a skilled workforce ready to increase competitiveness in the new economy. By leveraging the state's existing training and placement platforms, the plan is to connect thousands of Rhode Islanders to the skills and resources they need to return to the workforce in more resilient jobs and careers and provide meaningful workforce solutions for employers in hardest hit industries as they emerge from the negative effects of the pandemic. According to the Department, this presents an opportunity to finally address longstanding inequities and systemic challenges facing our state's workers in the hardest hit communities.

The Department reports that this initiative has an average cost of engagement of \$5,600 per person. It is anticipated that with an investment of \$40.0 million over three (3) years, the Department could engage approximately 7,000 Rhode Islanders and serve hundreds of businesses in industries driving the state's economy. The Governor's plan includes \$10.0 million in funding the first year (FY2023), with an additional \$15.0 million planned for each of FY2024 and FY2025.

Key components of the proposal include (quoted directly from budget documents):

- **U.S. Treasury Eligibility Category:** Economic and Workforce Development
- **Equity Components:**
 - **Population:** The initiative would focus on those communities hardest hit by the pandemic, to ensure those who have most borne the brunt of the pandemic have a meaningful opportunity to reap the benefits of the response and would target impacted small businesses and hardest-hit industries.
 - **Awareness:** This initiative leverages existing sector partnerships, training providers, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and recruitment entities to ensure broad and equal awareness of its programmatic offerings. Organizations like Skills for Rhode Island's Future have years of experience recruiting within historically underserved communities, and the Department deploys a multi-platform strategy to ensure statewide awareness.
 - **Access and Distribution:** The industry partnerships that are the core drivers of the services provided in this initiative ensure that they are made available across the state to all communities. They work to intentionally identify and address any administrative challenges and the Department is committed to removing any bureaucratic barriers that may incidentally result in disparities in ability to access or complete services and trainings. Additionally, the robust support services offered through the initiative provide a means to overcome obstacles that might prevent an individual from participating in a training or accepting a job.
 - **Outcomes:** Among the outcomes that will be evaluated are the program's success in serving the target populations described above, looking specifically at the number of individuals enrolled in

training, successfully completing training, placed in new jobs, and placed in higher income positions.

- **Performance Metrics:** Monitor the following:
 - Demographic and economic characteristics of participants;
 - Program wide cost per head
 - Number of new hires
 - Number of individuals with skills gains
 - Number of individuals who have a demonstrable increase in wages and,
 - Businesses served through recruitment, job placement, or incumbent worker training.