

The year '2020' is written in a very large, white, sans-serif font, with the '20' stacked above the '20'. The text is positioned on the left side of the cover, overlapping the brick building background.

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The words 'ANNUAL REPORT' are written in a white, all-caps, sans-serif font, stacked in two lines. The text is located at the bottom left of the cover, below the year '2020'.

ANNUAL
REPORT

State of Rhode Island
Department of Labor and Training
2020 Annual Report

Published April 1, 2021

Introduction

Dear Rhode Islanders:

It is my honor to present the Department of Labor and Training's 2020 Annual Report to the people of Rhode Island, our partners and colleagues in state government, elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders.

When the U.S. economy ground to a halt in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, states experienced a dramatic surge in unemployment claims. Rhode Island was no exception. The Department of Labor and Training (DLT) received over 200,000 Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims in just a few months – far surpassing the number of claims we received in all of 2009, at the height of the Great Recession.

DLT's Income Support Division rose to the challenge. In mere weeks, we implemented a virtual call center, allowing our staff to safely take calls from home for the first time ever. When the federal government established the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program for self-employed and gig economy workers who would not normally be eligible for benefits, we became the first state in the entire country to launch our application. We also saw a surge in usage of the WorkShare program, which allows Rhode Island businesses facing downturns to keep on employees at fewer hours while making up some of their lost wages with UI benefits. In response to an onslaught of attempted fraud, we put in place new solutions to detect and prevent fraud while still allowing legitimate claims to access their benefits.

Despite these new, unforeseen challenges, throughout 2020 Rhode Island consistently remained one of the fastest states in the country at getting claimants paid.

Despite these new, unforeseen challenges, throughout 2020 Rhode Island consistently remained one of the fastest states in the country at getting claimants paid. We were not perfect, of course, but I am proud of what DLT was able to accomplish under these unprecedented circumstances. Our number one priority is making sure that we are able to get benefits to the

people who need them most as quickly as possible. In the coming months, we will be launching a new online platform that will make the application and certification process even easier for Rhode Islanders.

Besides unemployment insurance, all of the other units and divisions across the Department also saw increased demand and had to adapt to working through a pandemic. The Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) and Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) programs received an influx of claims as Rhode Islanders used these important programs to quarantine, isolate, and care for loved ones with COVID-19.

The Workers' Compensation Division saw increases in COVID-19 related claims coinciding with the spring and fall surges of the virus and shifted to electronic document submission to be able to continue performing their work.

Our Workforce Regulation and Safety Division worked hard to perform investigations, inspections, and conduct trade license examinations, all while adhering to Department of Health's COVID-19 guidelines.

The Labor Market Information Division provided valuable information on the scope of the economic crisis, providing policymakers, press, and the public with critical insight on the impact of the virus and public health measures across different industries and demographic groups in Rhode Island.

Workforce Development Services (WDS) provided career assistance to thousands of Rhode Islanders, even when one-stop career centers were closed to the public. WDS helped dozens of companies through the Rapid Response programs and developed new ways to conduct services online, such as through our new, virtual career center that allows us to serve even more jobseekers virtually.

DLT also launched Back to Work RI, a workforce development initiative designed to train, support, and hire thousands of Rhode Islanders who have been displaced by COVID-19. To date, over 5,000 people have enrolled in a training or been placed in a job through this initiative. We also saw continued success with the Real Jobs RI program, which as of the end of 2020 had served over 11,000 Rhode Islanders and 1,800 businesses.

I am humbled to be taking the helm of the Department at this moment in history. We have faced unprecedented challenges this past year, but those challenges led to innovations in our department that would normally take years to accomplish. 2020 was a year of response, and 2021 will be a year of rebuilding. Through our continued efforts, our hope is that Rhode Island's economy will come back from the pandemic even stronger than before.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Weldon

Acting Director

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

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Labor Market Information

The **Labor Market Information (LMI)** Division is a central resource for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on the state’s labor market. LMI aims to make the latest information readily available to Rhode Island workers, businesses, economist, policy makers and the media so they can make informed decisions about the economic future.

COVID-19 took a toll on the Rhode Island economy, increasing the need for labor market statistics. The LMI Division responded to the challenge replying to essential requests from the Governor’s office, other public officials, various state agencies, the media, and special researchers for information on job losses and claims filings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the state shutdown.

In response to these requests, LMI staff prepared a special publication, “Social Distancing and the COVID-19 Crisis” which provided an in-depth analysis of initial claims filed during the nine-week period during which many state businesses were ordered closed. The publication, available on the LMI website,¹ provides breakouts of claims filed by gender, race, education, industry, occupation, size of employer, and residence.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/lmi.

Labor Force Conditions in 2020

Rhode Island experienced record-breaking employment in February 2020, with an estimated 507,200 RI-based jobs, the highest job count on record. Several economic sectors were at all-time highs and the state’s unemployment rate was at a thirty-year low. By March, however, COVID-19 had come to Rhode Island. Thousands of workers were suddenly unemployed as several industries in the state were ordered to close and Rhode Island residents were told to stay at home to control the spread of the coronavirus.

On March 13, Rhode Island casinos closed; a few days later, day care centers were ordered closed, restaurants were closed to take-out orders only, and social gatherings were limited to no more than ten people. As the month continued, fitness centers, hair and nail salons, recreation and entertainment facilities, and all non-essential retail businesses were all ordered to close. Elective surgeries were cancelled, and medical appointments were limited to telephone and video interviews all to stop the spread of COVID-19. Rhode Island’s “stay at home” order would continue until May 9.

Rhode Island businesses shed 5,200 jobs in March and the state’s unemployment rate increased to 4.0 percent. In April, an additional 102,800 jobs were lost, by far the largest over-the-month job loss in state history. A total of 108,000 jobs were lost during March and April and the state’s unemployment rate hit 17.4 percent in April 2020.

All private sector industries lost jobs during March and April, with 60 percent of the job losses occurring in the Accommodation & Food Services (-32,600), Health Care & Social Assistance (-17,400), and Retail Trade (-11,200) sectors. Overall, lower wage industries were much more impacted by the pandemic than those with higher average wages. Low-wage industries, those with average annual wages below \$40,000 accounted 58 percent of the jobs lost during the shutdown, while mid-wage industries, those with average

¹ <https://dlt.ri.gov/documents/pdf/lmi/socialdistancing.pdf>

annual wages between \$40,000 and \$65,000 accounted for 34 percent of the jobs lost and high-wage industries, those with average annual wages above \$65,000 accounted for nine percent of the jobs lost during the shutdown.

Workers employed in lower wage occupations had been more impacted by the social distancing guidelines than those whose jobs pay average and above average wages. While occupations with median wages below \$20 an hour employ 57 percent of all workers employed in Rhode-Island based jobs, nearly two-thirds (66.0%) of the initial claims filed between March 8th and May 9th had been by workers employed in occupations paying less than \$20 an hour.

In May, Rhode Island began the process of reopening the state's economy. Reopening occurred in phases with the state moving from one phase to the next based on pre-established criteria which monitored the spread of the virus. Between April and November, the state regained a total of 64,400 jobs, 59 percent of the total jobs lost. But in December, a resurgence of Covid-19 cases lead to an economic "pause" affecting gyms, recreation facilities and restaurant compacity resulting in a loss of 5,800 jobs, the state's first over-the-month job loss since April.

The state ended the year with an unemployment rate of 7.9 percent, highest in New England and seventh highest in the country. There were 495,900 Rhode Islanders residents employed in December 2020 and 42,800 unemployed, up 22,400 over the year. The state's labor force was down 23,600 from December 2019. The number of jobs in the state is still down 49,400 or 9.7 percent since February's all-time high of 507,200 with employment in the Leisure & Hospitality (-17,400), Education & Health Services (-11,900) and Professional & Business Services (-3,400) industries significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

Income Support

The **Income Support Division** provides financial assistance to Rhode Islanders who are temporarily out of work, allowing them to support themselves and their families until they can return to work. The largest benefit programs within the Income Support Division are Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI).

In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many parts of the economy to shut down, resulting in the largest unemployment crisis in generations. In mere weeks, the Department surpassed the number of claims received in all of 2009 at the height of the Great Recession. Rhode Island's unemployment insurance program was leading the pack from the very beginning of the pandemic. In March 2020, RI was the best state in the country at both taking in claims and getting them paid. In December 2020, Rhode Island ended the year as the number one state in the country for payment timeliness.

The pandemic also resulted in the creation of numerous federal unemployment benefit programs. The Department of Labor and Training, alongside the state's Division of Information Technology, worked to implement these programs as quickly as possible to allow Rhode Islanders to access the benefits they needed. In collaboration with Research Improving People's Lives (RIPL) and Amazon Web Services (AWS), Rhode Island became the first state in the country to make the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) application available for residents. DLT also quickly spun up a cloud-based weekly certification system that was able to handle the unprecedented volume of claimants.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/ui and dlt.ri.gov/tdi

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a federal/state insurance program financed by employers through payroll taxes. UI provides temporary income support to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and have earned enough wages within a specific base period to qualify. The maximum benefit rate payable in 2020 was \$599 per week for up to 26 weeks. In 2020, economic indicators allowed for added weeks through the Extended Benefits (EB) program, and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program established through the CARES Act also provided claimants with additional weeks beyond the baseline of 26 weeks.

The Department received 294,070 regular UI claims in 2020. Of these, 247,391 were COVID-19 related. The average weekly benefit was \$317, and the average duration was 14 weeks. Overall, 2,030,082 payments were issued, totaling \$644.3 million.

Rhode Island also received 298,673 initial Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims in 2020. PUA is a federal unemployment compensation program instituted by the CARES Act that provides unemployment benefits to self-employed individuals, gig economy workers, independent contractors, and others who are impacted by COVID-19 and would not normally be eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

The combined total of regular UI and PUA claims received in 2020 is 592,743 – over ten times the number of initial UI claims received in 2019 (55,962).

The balance of the UI trust fund, which employers pay into through unemployment insurance taxes, was \$534,439,312.54 on January 2, 2020 and ended the year at \$174,674,005.97 on December 31, 2020.

WorkShare

When Rhode Island employers experience a temporary, non-seasonal slowdown in business, the **WorkShare** program helps them to avoid layoffs by allowing employees to work a reduced workweek while collecting a percentage of UI.

Usage of the WorkShare program increased substantially in 2020, as companies used the program to help address COVID-19 related slowdowns in business or partial shutdowns. In 2020, the WorkShare program averted 2,248 layoffs at 170 Rhode Island companies. The Department received 6,140 initial WorkShare claims and issued 126,695 payments. In comparison, in 2019 the Department received 1,094 initial claims and issued 16,173 payments, averting an estimated 269 layoffs.

RESEA Program

The **Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)** program aims to help UI claimants with the highest risk of exhausting benefits return to work faster by providing reemployment services. Traditionally, this has been offered through in-person assessments and job search assistance. RESEA also helps to maintain the integrity of the UI program by ensuring that claimants meet eligibility requirements and preventing improper payments.

In 2020, RESEA received \$1,511,154 in federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, in anticipation of serving 8,000 Rhode Islanders. However, due to the pandemic, the RESEA program was only able to assist 300 customers. Rhode Island is exploring creative technology solutions to assist more Rhode Islanders virtually.

Federal Claims

Rhode Island administers two federal unemployment compensation programs aimed at assisting former federal employees and servicemembers. Individuals in both programs must meet the same eligibility requirements as other unemployment insurance claimants.

The **Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE)** program provides unemployment compensation for federal employees who lost their employment through no fault of their own. There were 217 initial UCFE claims in 2020, with a total of \$888,064 in benefits paid.

The **Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX)** program provides unemployment compensation benefits to individuals transitioning from military service to the civilian labor market. In 2020, there were 97 initial UCX claims, with a net payment of \$603,453.

Temporary Disability Insurance

The **Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI)** program is a state-administered insurance program designed to provide financial protection to those unable to work due to illness or injury. Unlike workers' compensation insurance, which protects against income loss caused by job-related disabilities, TDI covers disabilities that are not work-connected or are otherwise not covered by workers' compensation. Together, the two programs ensure that virtually all Rhode Island wage and salary workers will receive a weekly income while they are medically unable to work.

In 2020, the Department received 44,494 TDI claims, an increase of 11,090 from 2019, and issued 339,402 payments. Payments totaled \$180,327,767, with an average weekly benefit amount of \$531 (\$10 higher than in 2019). The average claim duration was 11.4 weeks, a decrease of 6 percent from 2019.

The TDI program is financed entirely by workers who are protected by the program. There were 420,900 total workers paying TDI taxes in 2020. The TDI Trust Fund had an income of \$217,290,534, and expenditures totaled \$205,222,513. The year-end fund balance was \$95,554,513.

Temporary Caregiver Insurance

In 2014, Rhode Island established the **Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI)** program, becoming one of the first states in the country to enact paid family leave. TCI provides up to four weeks of benefits for individuals taking time out of work to bond with a new child or care for an ill family member.

Many Rhode Islanders used the TCI program to care for family members who were impacted by COVID-19. The Department received 16,139 total TCI claims in 2020, a 26 percent increase from 2019, and issued 26,773 payments. The total amount of payments was \$15,186,061 – up 5 percent from 2019 – with an average weekly benefit amount of \$567. The average claim duration was 3.3 weeks.

Police Officers' Relief Fund and Firefighters' Relief Fund

The **Police Officers' Relief Fund** and **Firefighters' Relief Fund** provide financial support to the families of deceased or permanently disabled first responders. If an active or retired police officer or firefighter dies in the line of duty or from certain health conditions, the corresponding fund offers an annuity to the surviving spouse and each dependent child until they reach the age of 18. In 2020, there were 188 recipients of Police Officers' Annuity Benefits, totaling \$685,350, and there were 676 recipients of Firefighters' Annuity Benefits, totaling \$2,481,350.

The Police Officers' and Firefighters' Relief Funds also offer tuition payment for permanently disabled firefighters as well as the dependents of deceased or permanently disabled firefighters at any Rhode Island state college or university. 14 dependents received tuition benefits from the Police Officers' Relief Fund, as well as 34 dependents and 1 firefighter who received tuition benefits from the Firefighters' Relief Fund. The total tuition expenditures were \$104,432 for the Police Officers' Relief Fund and \$300,856 for the Firefighters' Relief Fund.

Central Adjudication Unit

The **Central Adjudication Unit (CAU)** conducts initial interviews and research into disputed unemployment insurance claims to determine whether the claimant is eligible for benefits.

The CAU rendered 18,009 adjudication decisions in 2020. Nine thousand nine hundred and eighty-five (9,985) of these decisions involved separation issues, meaning that the circumstances of the job termination were in question. 40.7 percent of separation-related claims resulted in the denial of UI benefits.

Additionally, 8,024 decisions involved non-separation issues, which relate to standard qualifications or continued eligibility (such as evidence of work or availability for work). 86.9 percent of these claims resulted in the denial of benefits.

Fraud Unit

To preserve the integrity of the UI and TDI programs, the **UI/TDI Fraud Unit** investigates suspicious activity.

In 2020, the UI/TDI Fraud Unit investigated 34 overpayment cases and detected \$203,712 in overpayments. The Department recovers UI and TDI overpayments obtained through fraudulent means by intercepting state and federal income tax refunds and lottery winnings, benefit payment offset, direct payment and court-ordered restitution. \$3,263,161 was recovered in UI overpayments and \$48,845 was recovered in TDI overpayments.

The Department's Legal Division criminally prosecuted 18 UI fraud cases in 2020, with \$137,179 in restitution ordered.

Additionally, the Department launched robust fraud prevention and detection efforts to combat imposter fraud, which is when a fraudster illegally files for unemployment benefits using someone else's previously stolen information. Imposter fraud is a national issue that became widespread as a result of the pandemic. As of March 5, 2021, the Department has identified 56,365 confirmed fraudulent claims and 326,319 suspected fraudulent claims. Through proactive strategies, the Department prevented an estimated \$3.2 billion in unemployment benefits from being paid out to fraudsters over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement

The U.S. Department of Labor's **Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM)** program is a diagnostic tool used to audit the accuracy of UI claims. Analyzing a sample of weekly benefits and denied claims, BAM identifies overpayments and underpayments and then determines the cause of and party responsible for the error. In 2020, the BAM sample of 236 claims in Rhode Island found that 77.1 percent of claims were paid properly, whereas 22.9 percent were overpaid, and 0.20 percent were underpaid. Full results can be found on the U.S. Department of Labor website.

Workers' Compensation

All Rhode Island employers are required to maintain workers' compensation insurance, which provides workers with protection in the event of a work-related injury or illness by covering missed wages and medical expenses. At the Department of Labor and Training, the **Workers' Compensation Division** monitors the state's workers' compensation system, ensuring that all required employers have insurance coverage, that appropriate documents are filed to protect injured workers and employers, that claims are paid correctly, and that measures are taken to detect and prevent fraud.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division's Cranston office moved to a remote-first posture in mid-April, with rotating socially distanced staff onsite for essential activities. This approach allowed the Division to maintain same-day response times to claimant questions and all other inquiries. In addition, the Claims Unit began accepting electronic document submissions to better accommodate claim administrators navigating their own teleworking challenges. The Division continues to regularly collaborate remotely with industry stakeholders, national standards bodies, and counterpart agencies.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/wc.

Workers' Compensation Claims

The number of workplace injuries decreased by 24 percent from 2019. In 2020, there were 5,106 reported indemnity injuries – meaning that the worker was paid weekly benefits – and 9,472 non-indemnity injuries, also referred to as “no lost time” or “medical-only” injuries because the disability did not exceed the waiting period of three days from earning full wages.

The number of COVID-related workers' compensation claims filed was 1,425, constituting roughly 10 percent of overall volume. New filings consistently tracked in frequency with the spring and fall surges of the virus. Claim demographics were concentrated in healthcare, congregate care, and other close-contact professions and industries.

Rather than submitting claims to an insurance company, certain Rhode Island employers can opt to self-insure and pay workers' compensation claims out of their own funds. The Department certified 23 self-insured employers in 2020.

Education Unit

The Workers' Compensation **Education Unit** keeps employers and employees informed about workplace safety and workers' compensation benefits and procedures. Unit representatives reach out to employers, employee groups, and medical professionals, offering employer education workshops and on-site consultations.

The Education Unit has a dedicated information line to field questions regarding workers' compensation or workforce health and safety. In 2020, the Education Unit received 4,121 telephone calls to the information line as well as 522 emails.

Fraud and Compliance Unit

The **Fraud and Compliance Unit** detects, prevents, and refers for criminal prosecution any suspected fraudulent workers' compensation activity. The unit also ensures employer and insurer compliance with workers' compensation requirements, to ensure that Rhode Island's workers are protected.

In 2020, the number of employers penalized for failure to carry workers' compensation insurance dropped to 71, a reduction of approximately 30 percent from the prior year. A possible reason for this is that numerous businesses closed permanently due to the pandemic. Of these lack of insurance violations, 54 came into compliance and were penalized in-house for a total of \$57,232.22, while 17 uninsured employers were referred to Workers' Compensation Court for civil prosecutions, resulting in \$158,650.34 in restitution ordered.

In addition to penalizing employers for failing to have workers' compensation insurance coverage, the Unit also penalizes insurance carriers for failing to report active coverage. In 2020, 494 carrier penalties were issued, resulting in fines of \$123,500.

Another responsibility of this Unit is to ensure that all workers are protected, either as employees or as independent contractors and that the necessary forms are filed. In 2020, the Unit processed over 3,800 independent contractor forms.

Uninsured Protection Fund

The **Rhode Island Uninsured Protection Fund (UPF)**, formerly the Uninsured Employer Fund, was established in 2007 to provide relief to individuals injured while working for employers who failed to maintain workers' compensation insurance. The UPF has been capitalized through filing fees at the Workers' Compensation Court per RI General Law §28-35-32. As of December 31, 2020, the balance in the UPF was \$1,894,670.56. The UPF received 8 applications for claims and made payments in the amount of \$43,626.49.

Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)

The **Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)** collects a mandated assessment on premiums within the workers' compensation system. This assessment provides appropriations for the Division of Workers' Compensation, the Workers' Compensation Court, the Medical Advisory Board, and the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council.

In 2020, there were 450 requests for reimbursement from the WCAF and \$775,685.54 in total reimbursements. Some reimbursements that would normally have been received and paid in 2020 have been delayed and should be submitted and processed in 2021 due to the pandemic. Office closures, insurer staffing issues and remote working has delayed the submission of reimbursement requests.

Chief Judge Robert F. Arrigan Rehabilitation Center

Arrigan Center Treatment Activity 2020	
Total Treatments*	884
Functional Capacity Evaluation	80
Therapeutic Treatment (PT/OT/Psych)	488
Evaluation Only	105
Completed Treatment	123
Did Not Complete Treatment	171
In Treatment at Time of Data Collection	89
Vocational Rehabilitation	80
Completed Program	22
Did Not Complete Program	30
In Treatment at Time of Data Collection	28
Chronic Pain Management	93
Evaluation Only	9
Completed Treatment	12
Did Not Complete Treatment	35
In Treatment at Time of Data Collection	37
<i>*Patients typically participate in several disciplines during treatment. Subsequently, the number of total treatments (884) is higher than the total number of individuals receiving treatment (661).</i>	

Established through the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Act, the **Chief Judge Robert F. Arrigan Rehabilitation Center** integrates treatment from medical doctors, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists, and vocational counselors to rehabilitate workers who have been injured on the job.

Injured workers must be referred by a physician or by the Workers' Compensation Court, and services are offered at no cost to patients covered by workers' compensation insurance.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arrigan Center was closed for treatment from March 15, 2020 through July 15, 2020. In 2020, there were 911 referrals to the Arrigan Center and 661 patients admitted for treatment. Sixty-five percent of patients had no prior workers' compensation injuries. Of the 157 who completed treatment, 103 returned to work (66 percent) and 54 did not return to work (34 percent).

Workforce Regulation and Safety

The **Workforce Regulation and Safety Division** is charged with enforcing the safety laws that protect Rhode Island’s workforce, including fair collection of wages, child labor laws, trade licensing, apprenticeship training, hazardous substance exposure, weights and measures, and prevailing wage laws. This is accomplished through licensing, inspection programs, educational programs, and labor law enforcement.

During 2020, the staff worked carefully and diligently to perform their tasks, to minimize the disruption of services to the public. This involved performing investigations, inspections, and conducting trade license examinations, all accomplished while adhering to RI Department of Health safety guidelines.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/wrs.

Labor Standards

The **Labor Standards Unit** enforces workplace laws and ensures that Rhode Island’s employees receive the wages they have earned. Labor Standards investigates wage complaints involving minimum wage, payment of wages, overtime, Sunday/holiday premium pay, and vacation pay upon termination, as well as child labor, parental and family medical leave, and industrial homework.

In, 2020, there were 382 claims filed. 275 claims were closed in 2020, and 458 claims were still in process at the time of the data collection.

Professional Regulation

The **Professional Regulation Unit** is responsible for monitoring and enforcing prevailing wage and safety laws, as well as for testing and licensing several technical professions.

RI General Law §37-13 mandates that any contractor awarded a bid on a public works construction project of more than \$1,000 must pay prevailing wage rates. During 2020, 42 prevailing wage cases were filed and \$209,824 was recovered in back wages and penalties.

Trade Licensing Activity 2019	
Examinations Performed	2,055
Licenses (issued or renewed)	30,150
Electrician	8,087
Hoisting Engineer	9,574
Pipefitter, Refrigeration Technician, Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitter, Sheet Metal Worker	7,421
Telecommunication	1,821
Plumbers and Irrigators	2,249
Burglar Alarm	998

The **Trade Licensing Section** licensed 30,150 technical professionals in 2020, many with multiple licenses. It also monitors and enforces trade laws pertaining to electricians, hoisting engineers, pipefitters, refrigeration technicians, sprinkler fitters, plumbers, sheet metal workers, and telecommunications technicians.

The **Apprenticeship Section** registers, coordinates, and regulates training programs in which an apprentice receives technical instruction while employed in a full-time occupation, thereby achieving certification. In 2020, there were 485 active sponsors and 2,986 active apprentices. Seven hundred eighty-five (785) new apprentice registrations were processed, and 314 completed a program. The proven success of the

registered apprenticeship training model has been recognized by many industries seeking to build a skilled workforce.

The Apprentice Section oversees training activities in licensed trades, such as electricians, in non-licensed construction trades, such as roofers. Over the past five years, the state has partnered with a non-profit intermediary, Building Futures, to build capacity and expand the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) system through an initiative called Apprenticeship RI. Through these efforts, the state has expanded the use of the RA model to other apprentice-able occupations in high demand occupations, such as RNs, LPNs, pharmacy technicians, community health workers, data scientists, and many others. From 2017 to 2020, 1,192 new registered apprentices have been placed in 40 newly apprenticed occupations, representing 32% of the total registered apprentices in the same period (3,758) In 2020, 28% (221) of all new registered apprentices were in non-construction occupations.

Occupational Safety

The **Occupational Safety Unit** directs, coordinates, and enforces the safety inspections of boilers and elevators, the storage and handling of hazardous substances, and the accuracy of weights and measures within Rhode Island's business establishments. State inspections are synchronized with local government requirements to ensure that Rhode Islanders have a safe environment in which to work and live.

In 2020, the Elevator Section performed 4,075 inspections and issued 3,901 certificates of operation. One hundred forty-five (145) permits for new installations and 214 licenses were granted. The Elevator Section also issued 3,164 violation letters.

The Boiler Section issued 6,299 Certificates of Operation and conducted 7,627 inspections. One hundred forty (140) permits were granted for new installations, and 102 commission licenses were issued.

The Right-to-Know Section registered 5,384 employers in 2020 and completed 203 inspections.

Workforce Development Services

The **Workforce Development Services (WDS)** Division is dedicated to the advancement of all who comprise the workforce: those who perform the work and those who hire them. The division oversees a variety of programs that guide jobseekers to suitable employment and introduce employers to qualified workers.

The global pandemic challenged WDS to rethink its approach to serving Rhode Islanders in 2020 and beyond. The Division implemented virtual services for all customers to maintain the level of service WDS has historically provided.

The Department remains a core partner in Rhode Island's four netWORKri offices — the local offices of the national network of American Job Center's CareerOne locations. In 2020, 1,731 jobseekers were served in total, including 1,576 unemployed individuals. Additionally, 625 employers were served.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/wds.

WIOA Title 1B Programs

The Workforce Development Services division supports programs under Title IB of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) by disbursing WIOA funds to Rhode Island's two Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), who, as subgrantees, provide Title IB program services in the State of Rhode Island. The LWDBs—the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island and Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston—are responsible for the operations of the WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, and WIOA Youth programs under the Act. In 2020, there were 228 adults, 303 dislocated workers, and 450 youths served in Rhode Island under WIOA Title IB.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) provides monetary benefits and educational assistance to workers who have lost their jobs or whose hours of work and wages have been reduced due to foreign competition including increased imports or a shift in production out of the United States. TAA services may include educational and occupational training, on-the-job training, job search and relocation allowances, income support, and other reemployment services. In 2020, there were 29 TAA program participants, with 14 participants trained and a total training allocation of \$127,697.47.

Additionally, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) provides a wage subsidy to eligible individuals 50 years of age or older who become reemployed at a lower wage than they previously earned. Six individuals participated in RTAA in 2020.

Finally, supplemental support with healthcare premium costs through the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC), originally set to expire on December 31, 2019, has been extended through December 31, 2021.

Veterans Service Unit

The Veterans Service Unit employs a two-pronged approach: 1) directing veterans to meaningful employment through job placement and training opportunities and 2) educating RI's employer community on the wealth of skills and experience which veterans bring to the civilian workforce.

In 2020, despite the challenges of providing services during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Veterans Service Unit maintained its presence as a resource for Veterans and served 252 veterans in total, placing 184 in gainful employment through more than 15 community partnerships.

Rapid Response Program

The Rapid Response program proactively responds to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing aid to companies and their affected workers, maximizing public and private resources and minimizing disruptions associated with job loss.

Rapid Response staff members provide intensive assistance to impacted employees, explaining how to apply for UI benefits, outlining netWORKri One-Stop Career Center reemployment services, and reviewing available training opportunities. Other services include coordinating job fairs for impacted employees and offering customized reemployment workshops, such as resume development and interviewing strategies.

Forty-seven (47) Rhode Island companies (including two trade-certified companies) were served by the Rapid Response program in 2020, assisting 4,456 impacted workers.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers as an incentive to promote hiring among individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced, "significant barriers to employment" (SBE), such as people with disabilities, returning citizens, and veterans.

Rhode Island received 19,920 WOTC applications in 2020. WOTC certified 11,184 applications which provided RI employers with a potential \$44,336,400 for hiring new employees.

Foreign Labor Certification and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers

The foreign labor certification process allows employers to bring foreign workers who are authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to live and work in the United States temporarily through the H2A and H2B programs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WDS was forced to temporarily suspend in-person services. The requirements to provide the full range of employment and training services to migrant seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) remained intact, however. WDS implemented a virtual model for provided outreach services. Virtual outreach has included referrals to supportive services, such as food pantries, health clinics, and farmworker advocacy groups.

Governor's Workforce Board

The **Governor's Workforce Board (GWB)** is formally established under RI General Law 42-102 as the state's primary policy-making body on workforce development matters. The GWB coordinates and oversees numerous workforce development programs through the implementation of the state's the Job Development Fund (JDF) and the federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Board consists of 23 members representing business, labor, education, community, and government with the statutory responsibility and authority to plan, coordinate, fund and evaluate nearly all statewide workforce development activities.

In 2020, the Governor's Workforce Board responded to the workforce challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing a unified direction for Rhode Island's comprehensive workforce development system now and into the future. This unified direction includes demand-driven programming and career pathways which support each other throughout the course of an individual's or employer's specific need and are implemented as cohesive components throughout the state's workforce system and programs.

For additional details on the programs within the Governor's Workforce Board in 2020, please visit the Governor's Workforce Board at gwb.ri.gov or view the GWB Annual Report Biennial Plan.²

Back to Work Rhode Island

In July 2020, the Department of Labor and Training launched the **Back to Work RI** program. Utilizing \$45 million in CARES Act funds, Back to Work RI aims to provide Rhode Islanders who have been economically impacted by COVID-19 with the tools they need to succeed in the post-COVID economy. The first of its kind, both in Rhode Island and nationally, the Back to Work RI Program is focused on creating a more equal and resilient economy that works for all Rhode Islanders by directly partnering directly with employers to ensure Rhode Islanders get the skills they need to secure well-paying jobs in growing industries.

As part of Back to Work RI, all participants can access an array of supportive services like childcare and transportation assistance to remove common barriers to program completion. Approximately 12.7 percent of participants are currently receiving some sort of support services.

To date, 5,474 have enrolled in a training or placement program, and 2,254 have already been hired or upskilled through the program.

Real Jobs Rhode Island

Established in 2015, **Real Jobs RI** grows business-led partnerships that build workforce solutions to address their unique workforce challenges. Solutions can include:

- Placing new employees into immediate job openings;
- Upskilling current employees to advance skills and/or remain competitive;

² <https://gwb.ri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GWB-Annual-Report-Biennial-Plan-FY2020-.pdf?d5c5d6>

- Helping business owners and entrepreneurs advance their ventures;
- Creating pipelines of talent for the future.

Real Jobs RI is a win-win because companies get the talent they need to compete globally and grow locally, and Rhode Islanders get opportunities to thrive in the economy. Currently, there are 43 Real Jobs RI partnerships across 16 industries.

As of December 31, 2020, Real Jobs RI has served 11,058 participants and 1,814 businesses. 75 percent of participants were placed after completing their training, and the average wage on those placements was \$33,300. Over half of Real Jobs RI placements had only a high school diploma/GED or less than a high school diploma. Additionally, 34 percent of placements were Latino, and 20 percent were Black.

Real Pathways Rhode Island

Real Pathways RI promotes and supports partnerships between and among nonprofits, education and training providers, community partners, and others within a specific geographic region or who focus on a similar population (such as veterans or non-English speakers). These partners collaborate and strategize how to best serve clients through comprehensive and cooperative workforce development programming that is demand-driven, linked to the larger workforce development network, and designed to maximize the opportunities for middle class employment.

As of December 31, 2020, Real Pathways RI placed 695 new hires and awarded 671 credentials; 25 individuals achieved an academic outcome and 25 individuals learned English.

Youth Programs

Career pathway activities allow youth to explore career options, gain career-focused technical expertise, and engage in work-based learning experiences like internships, service-learning projects, and school-based enterprises.

The Governor's Workforce Board is in its third implementation year for the **Real Skills for Youth** program which granted \$2.5 million to 19 partnerships during FY 2020. As of December 31, 2020, Real Skills for Youth has worked with over 1,600 participants and 235 businesses.

Summer 2020 was a transition period for many youth program providers and programs pivoted from in-person programming to mostly virtual. Many lessons were learned, and providers still delivered high-quality work experiences to RI youth participants. From balancing screen-time to creating virtual hang out spaces for youth to connect, providers discovered flexible approaches to our work. Through the Summer Work-Based Learning Outcomes Survey, GWB unveiled challenges that otherwise would've gone unseen, like participants struggling with internet access, conflicting priorities such as caring for siblings or adults with COVID-19 in the household, and from that developed best practices that strengthened support services allowing youth to fully participate.

With a recent 3-year commitment from American Student Assistance of \$1.5 million in addition to GWB state funding, the **Prepare RI** Internship Program expanded during its third year of programming in

Summer 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Skills for Rhode Island's Future pivoted the program from in-person internships to virtual industry projects, where Rhode Island high school juniors formed "corporations" to solve real-world pandemic-related challenges submitted by employers. Over 1,100 students applied for 475 internship slots. A total of 447 students completed the projects and participated in the final "pitch" competition in front of a panel of industry judges. Students earned \$1.2M in wages, four college credits from RI College, and an additional \$90,000 in direct incentives.

The GWB also granted \$2.2M of Federal CARES dollars to 32 employers across the state to subsidize summer jobs for 841 youth ages 16-24 for the COVID-19 Summer Jobs program. Jobs included making masks to distribute to the community, setting up outdoor areas and school buildings for social distancing, and creating learning kits for students to combat summer learning loss.

Non-Trade Apprenticeships

The Non-Trade Apprenticeship Development Program provides "startup" funding to help develop new and innovative apprenticeship training models in high-growth, high-demand fields that extend beyond the traditional trades. In FY 2020, the Governor's Workforce Board issued four Non-Trade Apprenticeship Development Grants to the Service Employees International Union - Education and Support Fund, Southside Community Land Trust, Tides Family Services and the RI Institute for Labor Studies.

The Governor's Workforce Board Non-Trade Apprenticeship Incentive Program provides incentive grants of \$1,000 per non-trade apprentice registered subsequent to January 1, 2016, after the completion of the required probationary period. Employers are eligible for up to \$5,000 in monetary incentive within any 12-month period. Thirty organizations received grants with a total of \$80,000 awarded in FY2020.

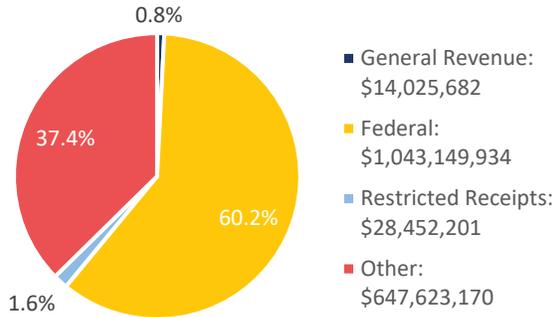
Incumbent Worker Training Grants

To remain competitive, organizations increasingly need to train and re-train existing members of their workforce. Incumbent Worker Training grants are matching grants of up to \$35,000 available to Rhode Island companies to help grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. During FY 2020, 61 companies applied for and received Incumbent Worker Training grants.

Budgetary Expenditures

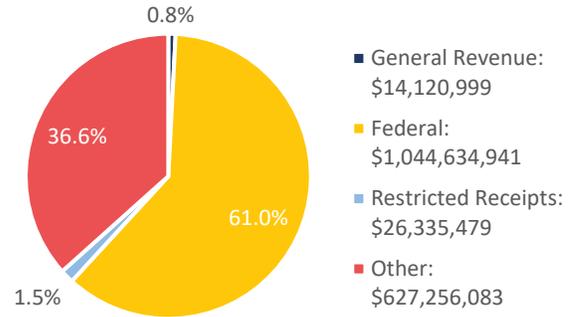
Actual Expenditures by Fund Fiscal Year 2020

Department Total: \$1,733,250,987



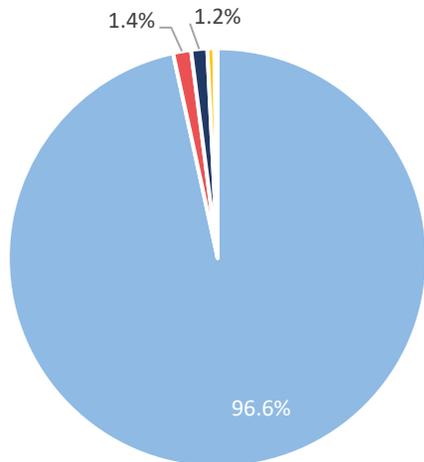
Budgeted Expenditures by Fund Fiscal Year 2021

Department Total: \$1,712,347,502



Actual Expenditures by Program Fiscal Year 2020

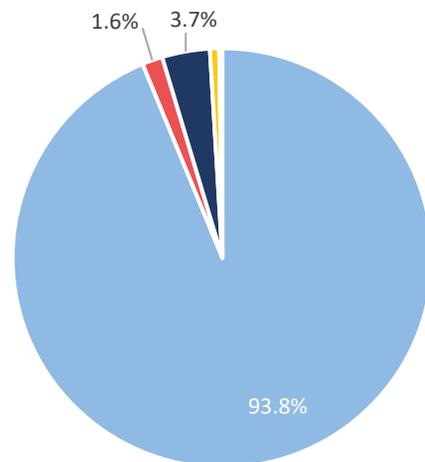
Department Total: \$1,733,250,987



- Income Support: \$1,674,163,830
- Workforce Development Services: \$24,026,919
- Governor's Workforce Board: \$21,465,293
- Injured Worker Services: \$9,325,539
- Workforce Regulation and Safety: \$3,155,091
- Central Management: \$678,580
- Labor Relations Board: \$435,735

Budgeted Expenditures by Program Fiscal Year 2021

Department Total: \$1,712,347,502



- Income Support: \$1,606,025,945
- Workforce Development Services: \$26,974,395
- Governor's Workforce Board: \$63,035,898
- Injured Worker Services: \$11,960,047
- Workforce Regulation and Safety: \$3,103,811
- Central Management: \$872,468
- Labor Relations Board: \$374,938

