

WorkShare FAQs

What is WorkShare?

Rhode Island's WorkShare program, administered by the Department of Labor and Training (DLT), assists employers facing economic downturns by connecting their workers with Unemployment Insurance (UI) to partially replace wages lost due to a reduction in work hours. Unlike typical UI, where workers receive a benefit because they have become disconnected from their employer, WorkShare keeps the employment relationship intact, benefitting both employers and workers alike. Employers retain their skilled workforce, while workers remain job-attached and receive most of their weekly pay and fringe benefits during a time when work hours have been reduced.

How does it work?

Employers facing downturns work with the DLT to establish a WorkShare plan, which articulates the amount of the work reduction (in hours), which units will be impacted, and information about the affected employees. Employees otherwise eligible for UI would be able to collect WorkShare benefits for the hours that their work has been reduced.

- The amount of work hours may be reduced from 10%-50%(per RIGL §28-44-69).
- Employers can have their entire operation participate or only specific units, shifts or departments.
- Employees' wages are partially replaced by UI benefits.
- Employers must continue to provide the same fringe benefits or must reduce all of their employees' benefits by the same amount.
- If workers are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, their union must approve the WorkShare plan prior to implementation.
- For non-union workplaces, employers must establish that they have informed each of the affected employees about the plan prior to implementation.
- In the event that no work is performed during a week when an employer is on WorkShare, covered employees would receive a full week of UI benefits in lieu of their WorkShare benefits.
- Benefit costs are charged to employers in the same manner as they are with regular UI.

How much can workers collect while on WorkShare?

WorkShare claimants are able to collect up to fifty (50%) of their weekly benefit rate. The average weekly UI payment is about \$368. Assuming that a worker regularly worked a forty (40) hour week and their hours have been reduced to twenty (20) hours, a worker earning the average payment would receive about \$184 in WorkShare benefits and half of their regular weekly compensation from their employer.

What about employers that temporarily close their operations, or reduce hours by more than fifty percent?

Employers that temporarily close down their entire operation would not qualify for WorkShare, as the WorkShare program is designed to serve those with a partial reduction in hours only. Their workers can apply for regular UI. Should they open for less than half of their normal work week, their employees would be able to remain on UI and receive a partial benefit, so long as their gross pay for that week is less than their UI weekly benefit rate.

- UI claimants must report any earnings they receive in each week they collect UI. This is done during their weekly claim certification.
- The first twenty percent (20%) of earnings are held harmless. Remaining earnings are reduced from their weekly benefit amount.
- Employers that close down and anticipate reopening within weeks should let DLT know that their workers will return to work on a date certain (this can be adjusted if necessary). Doing so will enable their employees to be exempt from looking for work while collecting UI, keeping them job-attached.

Have any questions?

The DLT is here to help. Please contact our WorkShare team at (401) 462-8418 or email dlt.workshare@dlt.ri.gov. For more information on WorkShare, please visit dlt.ri.gov/ui/workshare/.