

Request for Proposals

Community Engagement Partners

[RFP #CEP-2024-01]

**RI Department of Labor & Training
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Building 73
Cranston, RI 02920**

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**Proposals must be submitted no later than
Friday, March 1, 2024 at 4:00 PM**

Table of Contents

I. Funding Opportunity Description	3
A. Background	3
B. Eligibility	3
C. Required Activities and Deliverables	4
II. Award Information	5
A. Available Funding and Number of Awards	5
B. Award Duration and Timeline	5
C. Funding Structure and Eligible and Ineligible Expenses.....	5
D. Funding Stream and Authority.....	5
E. Notification to Applicants	5
III. Submission Information	6
A. Proposal Due Date and Time	6
B. How to Apply and Submission Requirements.....	7
C. Application Questions.....	7
D. Additional Attachments	8
IV. Grant Evaluation and Selection	8
V. Grant Administration and Reporting	9
A. Reporting Requirements.....	9
B. Right to Revoke Funding, Audit and Suspend Funds	9
VI. Appendices	10

I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) is issuing this Request for Proposals to identify up to five (5) additional qualified community-based organizations to join the Community Engagement Partners Initiative in Year Two. Community Engagement Partners advise the RIDLT on culturally- and linguistically-appropriate programming and engage in general education and outreach to better serve historically marginalized populations and populations with barriers to employment.

A. Background

In April 2023, the RIDLT's Office of Community Engagement launched a new Community Engagement Partners initiative to better serve all Rhode Islanders. The RIDLT selected 25 community-based organizations (hereafter referred to as "Community Partners") through competitive solicitation to advise the RIDLT on culturally- and linguistically-appropriate programming and to engage in general education and outreach to better serve historically marginalized populations and populations with barriers to employment. Community Partners are tasked to represent the interests and needs of their communities in reviewing and advising on RIDLT policies and program delivery, and to outreach to and educate their communities about RIDLT services and programs.

As of January 2024, the RIDLT convened 6 formal meetings with Community Partners. Concrete achievements of this initiative include:

- With Community Partner input, the RIDLT created a step-by-step brochure on how to apply for unemployment insurance (UI), and Community Partners disseminated those brochures to their clients; Community Partners have also translated the brochure into other languages.
- With Community Partner input, the RIDLT created flyers advertising RIDLT services and how to access those services, and Community Partners disseminated those flyers to their clients.
- The RIDLT created a UI help form so that Community Partners can directly refer their clients to timely one-on-one assistance with their claim from a UI representative.
- With Community Partner input, the RIDLT created a survey to gather information from Rhode Islanders about the employment services most in need and how they currently access those services; response analysis will inform how the RIDLT provides workforce services.
- The RIDLT is in the process of cultivating intentional relationships between Real Jobs RI training providers and Community Partners as recruitment partners so that Community Partner clients have better access to free training opportunities, and training programs have more diverse cohorts.

B. Eligibility

We invite all community-based organizations (non-profit and for-profit) serving marginalized populations, and/or populations who face particular workforce challenges, to apply. Marginalized populations are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life. Examples of marginalized communities include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and/or immigration status. Marginalization occurs due to unequal power relationships between social groups.¹

¹ Baah FO, Teitelman AM, Riegel B. Marginalization: conceptualizing patient vulnerabilities in the framework of social determinants of health—An integrative review. *Nursing Inquiry*. 2019;26(1):e12268. doi: 10.1111/nin.12268.

While the current twenty-five (25) Community Partners represent a diverse group of marginalized populations, we recognize that not all voices are represented through the existing cohort, and aim to fill those gaps through this solicitation. **We especially encourage community-based organizations representing the following populations to apply: Native Americans, Veterans, LGBTQIA+ populations, people with substance use disorders, and people with disabilities.**

Existing RIDLT grantees (except those who are already grantees under the Community Engagement Partners initiative), including Real Jobs partners, are eligible to apply. State agencies, municipalities, and local workforce boards are not eligible to apply.

Applicants will be asked to make the case in their application that they:

- 1) serve a distinct community of clients that is marginalized and/or faces particular workforce challenges;
- 2) are an effective convener, facilitator, and representative to gather input and feedback from that community on their barriers and needs and communicate that information back to the RIDLT; and
- 3) are in a position to effectively outreach to and educate the community they serve on workforce matters.

The applicant serves as Fiscal Agent for the grant as well as lead contact and administrator for all grant-related activities.

C. Required Activities and Deliverables

Grantees will be responsible for the following grant activities and associated deliverables in Year Two of the Community Engagement Partners initiative:

Activity 1: Represent the interests and needs of their communities in reviewing and advising on RIDLT policies and program delivery, including Unemployment Insurance, and America’s Job Center services and service delivery.

Deliverables:

- Attend in-person and actively participate in all mandatory working meetings (up to 8 meetings per year held on Thursdays at 10:30am-12:30pm) with RIDLT, and engage in related work in between meetings as requested by RIDLT.
- Convene up to two focus groups to gather information and feedback on workforce-related issues, as requested by RIDLT.
- Help design and disseminate up to two surveys to the community to gather information and feedback on workforce-related issues, as requested by RIDLT.

Activity 2: Outreach to and educate their community about RIDLT services and programs, including recruitment for job training and other programs.

Deliverables:

- Implement up to two awareness activities per quarter as requested by the RIDLT, such as an email blast, in-person event, recruitment fair, etc.

II. Award Information

A. Available Funding and Number of Awards

Each grantee will be funded at a maximum of \$15,000 for one year. Grantees will be funded \$12,000 for successful completion of activities and deliverables outlined in Section IC, and reimbursed up to \$3,000 for materials related to the implementation of RIDLT-requested surveys, focus groups, and outreach and community education activities.

The maximum number of awards for this Solicitation is five (5); the final number of awards will be determined by the evaluation process described in Section IV and the available funding. All awards are subject to the availability of funds and the execution of a contract that is acceptable to both the selected applicant and the RIDLT.

B. Award Duration and Timeline

The award period for each Community Partner selected through this solicitation will be one year. It is anticipated that Year Two of the Community Engagement Partners initiative will span May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025.

C. Funding Structure and Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

Successful applicants will be funded through two types of payments for a total annual award of up to \$15,000. Each grantee will receive \$12,000 in equal quarterly installments after a purchase order is issued and within 30 days of invoice receipt, assuming successful completion of activities and deliverables as appropriate. Each grantee can also be reimbursed up to \$3,000 total for reasonable costs of materials directly related to DLT-requested survey and focus group implementation, and DLT-requested outreach and community education on workforce matters. Reimbursable costs may include supplies, marketing materials including translation costs, participation incentives such as gift cards, and food. Reimbursements can be requested as frequently as monthly. Staff time and overhead or administrative costs are not eligible for reimbursement. Additional guidance on eligible and ineligible expenses will be provided if a grant is awarded.

D. Funding Stream and Authority

The authority for this award is governed by R.I.G.L. § 37-2 and Section 2.2 of the Purchasing Regulations. Funds for this grant may include, but are not limited to, General Revenue.

E. Notification to Applicants

- Potential applicants are advised to review all sections of this Request carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in the proposal being found nonresponsive.
- Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this Request will be rejected as being non-responsive.
- All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this Request, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the applicant. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

- Applicants are advised that all materials submitted to the state for consideration in response to this RFP will be considered public records as defined in Title 38, Chapter 2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request once an award has been made.
- Interested parties are advised to visit the RIDLT web site (<https://dlt.ri.gov/office-community-engagement>) on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this Request for Proposals.
- All proposals should include the lead applicant's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9 form, downloadable from https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fcontroller.admin.ri.gov%2Fsite%2Ffg%2Ffiles%2Fkgbur621%2Ffiles%2F2022-04%2FRI%2520Version%2520of%2520IRS%2520W-9%2520Form_0.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK
- In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation, a corporation without a Rhode Island business address, shall have the right to transact business in the state until it shall have procured a certificate of authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040) This is a requirement only of a successful vendor.
- DIVESTITURE OF INVESTMENTS IN IRAN REQUIREMENT: No vendor engaged in investment activities in Iran as described in R.I. Gen. Laws §37-2.5-2(b) may submit a bid proposal to, or renew a contract with, the Division of Purchases. Each vendor submitting a bid proposal or entering into a renewal of a contract is required to certify that the vendor does not appear on the list maintained by the General Treasurer pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §37-2.5-3.
- § 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy. – (a) Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies in all areas where the state dollar is spent, in employment, public service, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Employment Opportunity Office, at 222-3090.

III. Submission Information

A. Proposal Due Date and Time

Proposals must be received via email, by Pauline Abetti at pauline.abetti@dlt.ri.gov, no later than 4:00pm EST on Friday, March 1, 2024 in order to be considered, unless that deadline is amended by the RIDLT.

Schedule of Pertinent Dates

Release of Solicitation	January 17, 2024
Q & A deadline	February 23, 2024
Questions about this RFP may be submitted to the RIDLT by email to pauline.abetti@dlt.ri.gov . All questions and answers will be posted on the RIDLT website.	
Proposal Due Date	Friday, March 1, 2024
Grant Awards Announced	April 2024
Performance Period	May 1, 2024-April 30, 2025

B. How to Apply and Submission Requirements

Proposals must be submitted by email to pauline.abetti@dlt.ri.gov by the deadline with all of the required documents. Those documents are: completed application questions, Certification of Good Standing, a signed fiscal agent assurances form, and a copy of the applicant's W-9 Taxation Form.

C. Application Questions

Applicants should answer the following questions with a suggested maximum of 300 words for long form questions. It is strongly recommended to use the application form included in Appendix A.

- 1) Briefly describe the mission statement of your organization and outline the services you provide.
- 2) Describe the size and demographics of the community your organization serves. Estimate how many people your organization would be able to reach by survey and explain how you arrived at that number.
- 3) Explain why the perspective of your organization and community you serve is important for this purpose. Speak to how this community is historically marginalized and/or faces particular barriers in securing good jobs or growing their careers; also speak to any intersectionality and complexity or nuance of barriers. Mention any other challenges that your community faces with regard to interactions with the RIDLT, such as challenges with accessing unemployment insurance, experiencing wage theft, etc.
- 4) Explain why your organization will be an effective representative for that community to communicate their unique barriers and needs. Also explain how your organization currently outreaches to and educates the community you serve in a culturally- and linguistically-appropriate way, using specific examples (e.g., email campaigns, community events).
- 5) If selected, your organization will be asked to nominate a spokesperson to attend meetings with the RIDLT and other selected community partners. This spokesperson should be someone who has extended and recent experience working directly with the community you serve, and ideally is a member of that community themselves. This person can be different from the primary contact named above. Who from your organization will serve as the primary spokesperson for this purpose, and why are they a good fit for this role? You may attach a resume for this person, though this is not required.
- 6) Is there anything else that the RIDLT should know about your organization or community?

D. Additional Attachments

Applicants should also include:

- **Certification of Good Standing:** The applicant must submit a current Certificate of Good Standing from the RI Department of State. If this letter is not available in time for proposal submission, the applicant may submit proof of request. More information can be viewed at: <https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/business-services/order-certificates>
- **Fiscal Agent Assurances Form:** See Appendix B for the required form. This form is signed by the applicant to affirm that they will comply with all applicable regulations, policies, guidelines, and requirements of the RIDLT and the State of Rhode Island and have the fiscal capacity to administer the grant. (NEW APPLICANTS ONLY)
- **Copy of Applicant W-9 Taxation Form:** Downloadable from this [link](#).
- **Resume** of nominated spokesperson (optional)

IV. Grant Evaluation and Selection

RIDLT staff will perform an initial screening of applications to ensure that submission requirements were met.

An Evaluation Committee will score applications based on demonstration of eligibility and ability to implement the required activities according to the application requirements set out in Section 3C above. The committee will be composed of representatives from Department of Labor and Training and may also include representatives from other State Agencies. If necessary, oral presentation may be required to clarify content in the application.

Evaluators will be directed to consider the following questions when reviewing and scoring proposals for new applicants:

Community Served <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the community served historically marginalized and/or do they face particular workforce challenges?• Will representation of this community through the applicant organization provide a unique perspective that will help the RIDLT in its mission to serve Rhode Islanders more equitably?	40 points
Effectiveness as Convener and Spokesperson <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has the applicant made the case that they can effectively convene this community and collect meaningful feedback on barriers and needs?• Has the applicant made the case that they engage in effective, culturally- and linguistically-appropriate outreach and education to their community?	60 points

Final approval for each grant awarded shall be determined by the Director of the RIDLT, based on the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee and considering other factors such as population served or geographic distribution. For example, if an application is focused on a target population which has no representation through existing Community Partners, that application may be prioritized over others focused on a target population already represented, even if the latter receives a higher evaluation score than the former, provided the application is deemed otherwise adequate.

V. Grant Administration and Reporting

A. Reporting Requirements

All grantees will be required to provide evidence of successful completion of required activities through narrative and/or other reports.

Narrative reports may include information on:

- Attendance at mandatory meetings
- Focus group questions and summary of responses gathered
- Methods employed and results of survey dissemination
- Summary of education and outreach activities

B. Right to Revoke Funding, Audit and Suspend Funds

RIDLT reserves the right to revoke funding and require the return of unspent funds if the goals and timelines consistent with the approved Award Agreement are not met.

RIDLT also reserves the right to request access to perform an audit of partnership activities. Audits can be part of regular monitoring or in response to an emergent concern, including but not limited to outside inquiries or even “whistleblower” complaints. In order to meet its fiduciary responsibility for public funds, RIDLT reserves the right to suspend payment of any part of this grant.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A: Application Form

Organization Name:	
Primary Contact Name:	
Primary Contact Title:	
Primary Contact Email:	
Nominated Spokesperson Name:	
Nominated Spokesperson Title:	
Nominated Spokesperson Email:	
Fiscal Contact Name:	
Fiscal Contact Title:	
Fiscal Contact Email:	

Application Questions *(300 word maximum per question)*

- 1) Briefly describe the mission statement of your organization and outline the services you provide.
- 2) Describe the size and demographics of the community your organization serves. Estimate how many people your organization would be able to reach by survey and explain how you arrived at that number.
- 3) Explain why the perspective of your organization and community you serve is important for this purpose. Speak to how this community is historically marginalized and/or faces particular barriers in securing good jobs or growing their careers; also speak to any intersectionality and complexity or nuance of barriers. Mention any other challenges that your community faces with regard to interactions with the RIDLT, such as challenges with accessing unemployment insurance, experiencing wage theft, etc.

- 4) Explain why your organization will be an effective representative for that community to communicate their unique barriers and needs. Also explain how your organization currently outreaches to and educates the community you serve in a culturally- and linguistically-appropriate way, using specific examples (e.g., email campaigns, community events).

- 5) If selected, your organization will be asked to nominate a spokesperson to attend meetings with the RIDLT and other selected community partners. This spokesperson should be someone who has extended and recent experience working directly with the community you serve, and ideally is a member of that community themselves. This person can be different from the primary contact named above. Who from your organization will serve as the primary spokesperson for this purpose, and why are they a good fit for this role? You may attach a resume for this person, though this is not required.

- 6) Is there anything else that the RIDLT should know about your organization or community?

Appendix B: Fiscal Agent Assurances

The Lead Applicant hereby affirms and certifies that it will comply with all applicable regulations, policies, guidelines, and requirements of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) and the State of Rhode Island as they relate to the application, acceptance, and use of funding in this project. The Applicant further affirms and certifies that:

1. It possesses legal authority to apply for the grant, i.e., an official act of the Applicant's governing body has been duly adopted or passed, authorizing filing of the application, including all understandings and assurances contained therein and directing and authorizing the person identified as the official representative of the Applicant and to provide such additional information as may be required.
2. It will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d) prohibiting employment discrimination where discriminatory employment practices will result in unequal treatment of persons who are or should be benefiting from the grant-aided activity.
3. It will expend funds to supplement new and/or existing programs and not use these funds to supplant non-grant funds.
4. It will participate in any statewide assessment program or other evaluation program as required by RIDLT.
5. It will give RIDLT, or an authorized representative, the right of access to, and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the grant.
6. It will assure that status reports will be submitted to RIDLT, as required.
7. It will comply with all requirements imposed by RIDLT concerning special requirements of law and other administrative requirements.

The Applicant further acknowledges that it will serve as fiscal agent and will perform all financial management duties of the grant and accept responsibility for the proper use of grant funds. As Fiscal Agent, Applicant is responsible for maintaining separate records of disbursements made on the Applicant's behalf and disbursing those funds in accordance with the restrictions related to the grant.

The Fiscal Agent takes full responsibility for managing and documenting grant expenditures, as well as submitting financial reports for the grant. The Fiscal Agent is responsible for receiving and safeguarding grant funds. Furthermore, the Fiscal Agent is legally obligated to:

- maintain separate records of disbursements related to the grant;
- keep receipts for at least three years following closing of the grant;
- make financial records available to the State of Rhode Island and its representatives upon request;
- disburse funds in accordance with the purpose of the grant application; and,
- file the final financial report at the conclusion of the grant.

Organization Name: _____ **Federal Tax ID Number:** _____

Signature of Authorized Representative of Applicant

Date

Name and Title (Typed or Printed)