

# RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND TRAINING



ANNUAL REPORT





# A Message From The Director

Dear Rhode Islanders:

With great pride, I present the RI Department of Labor and Training's 2023 Annual Report to the people of Rhode Island, our partners and colleagues in state government, elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders. My top priorities as Director continue to be increasing incomes, improving our customer service, and ensuring a real focus on equity.

In 2023, the Department achieved remarkable milestones, including a historic low in unemployment at 2.6% and surpassing pre-pandemic job numbers to reach a record high of 511,300 jobs. This employment surge not only reflects a growing workforce but also underscores the resilience of Rhode Island's economy. With more residents actively participating in the labor market, our state's economy continues to thrive and expand, bolstering its already robust foundation.

The DLT provides Rhode Islanders access to an array of employment services at our local career centers and virtually through *backtoworkri.com* to support job seekers in finding suitable career paths by supporting interview preparation skills, resume building, and searching for jobs or training programs. The *Real Jobs RI* program continues to create meaningful career pathways for job seekers and support employers in addressing workforce gaps and industry challenges. Leveraging its network of over 60 active sector partnerships, across 19 industries, Real Jobs RI facilitated the placement or upskilling of over 7,000 individuals in 2023.

With the Department's continued focus on providing efficient and effective customer service to all Rhode Islanders, we established additional forms of communication to support claimants navigating our income support programs in 2023. We launched help forms for unemployment and temporary disability/caregiver insurance programs and introduced an employer help form for timely responses and guidance to employer questions. Enhancing customer engagement with the Department is instrumental in fostering stronger connections and delivering more effective services to the community.

Our Office of Community Engagement partnered with 25 community-based organizations to receive direct and impactful feedback that would inform enhancements to our program and services. The feedback we received was incredibly valuable in helping the Department maintain a focus on equity, ensuring that communities facing historical barriers in accessing our services could do so more effectively.

As we forge ahead with our work, our department is dedicated to expanding our workforce, undertaking crucial efforts to enhance the earnings of working families, and providing support to businesses. The outlook for Rhode Island's economy is promising, and we've made significant strides thus far. Leading an agency focused on revitalizing our economy and serving all of Rhode Island with prompt action remains an honor for me.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Weldon  
Director  
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

# State of Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training 2023 Annual Report

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# Labor Market Information



# Rhode Island Labor Market Conditions in 2023

The **Labor Market Information (LMI) Division** is a central resource for a wide variety of data relating to the Rhode Island economy. The LMI Division is responsible for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on the state's labor market. LMI in cooperation with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) operates four federal/state survey programs that collect information from RI-based employers and households concerning their employment situations. These federal/ state programs are operated in all states making data comparable across states and over time.

The types of information available from LMI, include employment and wage data by industry, location, and employer size; long- and short-term industry and occupational projections, industry staffing patterns, wage rates, labor force statistics and demographic profiles of unemployment insurance claimants. LMI aims to make the latest information readily available to Rhode Island workers, businesses, economists, researchers, and the media so they can make informed inferences and decisions about the Rhode Island economy.

Each year the LMI Division presents a review of labor market conditions at the State Estimating Conference in May and October. This year LMI staff continued to partner with other state agencies as part of the Healthcare Workforce Initiative tasked with identifying shortages in healthcare professions and ways to alleviate the shortages. LMI staff also participate in the Workforce Data Collection and Analytics Work Group. In addition, the division responds to special requests from the Governor's office, other public officials, various state agencies, the media, and special researchers for information on employment, unemployment, and wages.

For more information and resources, please visit [dlt.ri.gov/lmi](https://dlt.ri.gov/lmi).

The Rhode Island economy continued to improve in 2023 as the number of jobs in the state increased by 7,600 (1.5%) and the state's labor force grew by 6,000. As the year ended, more Rhode Island residents were employed (+3,500) and more were unemployed (+2,500) fueling growth in the state's labor force and an increase in the state's unemployment rate. The year ended with an unemployment rate of 3.4 percent, four-tenths of a percentage point higher than the December 2022 rate, but still below what economists consider full employment.

In 2023, nine economic sectors added jobs with the largest gains occurring in Healthcare & Social Assistance (+3,600), Accommodation & Foods Services (+2,200), and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (+1,400). Six sectors reported job losses during the year with the Management of Companies sector reporting the largest loss (-500) followed by a loss of 400 jobs in both the Retail Trade and Construction sectors.

Rhode Island-based jobs reached an all-time high in December 2023 with 509,100 jobs surpassing the previous high of 507,800 recorded in February 2020 the month before COVID-related shutdowns. Seven sectors have exceeded their pre-Covid employment levels - Professional & Technical Services (+3,900), Wholesale Trade (+1,100), Health Care & Social Assistance (+800), Construction (+700), Manufacturing (+500), Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (+500) and Transportation & Utilities (+400).

**“ Rhode Island-based jobs reached an all-time high in December 2023 ”**



# 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). The Department's priorities and strategic direction are to ensure continuous improvements in all Income Support programs.

Regarding Unemployment Insurance, Rhode Island continues to enhance online access for our customers by providing individualized claim status and information. Rhode Island continues to work with our vendor to improve the claims process and provide customers with additional self-service options. These new features continue to reduce call volume, increase claimant independence, and improve the customer's experience.

The Department's priority is to ensure that all customers have meaningful and equitable access to the UI program. The claims application has been enhanced to capture preferred languages which will improve customer service by minimizing any language barriers that may exist. In addition, all UI communications will be issued in English and Spanish.

Rhode Island continues to work with the USDOL UI Modernization team to increase customer understanding of UI notices and application questions. We continue to review and update these communications using plain language frameworks.

Lastly, the Department is in the process of applying for federal grants to streamline the claims filing process, facilitate the repayment of benefit overpayments, and enhance existing fraud detection measures. These efforts will improve the customer experience, equity and accessibility, fraud prevention and detection, and/or timeliness and backlog.

For more information and resources, please visit [dlt.ri.gov/ui](https://dlt.ri.gov/ui) for Unemployment Insurance and [dlt.ri.gov/tdi](https://dlt.ri.gov/tdi) for Temporary Disability/Caregiver Insurance.

## 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 2023 was \$680 per week for up to 26 weeks from January 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023. On July 1, 2023, the maximum benefit rate payable increased to \$705 per week for up to 26 weeks

The Department received 46,550 regular UI claims in 2023. The average weekly benefit was \$442, and the average duration was 14.6 weeks. Overall, 404,203 payments were issued, totaling \$178.8 million.

The balance of the UI trust fund, which employers pay into, through unemployment insurance taxes, was \$420,525,087.08 on January 1, 2023, and ended the year at \$496,022,647.52 on December 31, 2023.

## WorkShare

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

In 2023, the WorkShare program averted 362 layoffs at 60 Rhode Island companies. The Department received 1,326 initial WorkShare claims and issued 19,103 payments. In comparison, in 2022 the Department received 1,172 initial claims and issued 15,829 payments.

## 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. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, RESEA has been offered via a Virtual Career Center. All appointments are held virtually or by phone. RESEA also helps to maintain the integrity of the UI program by ensuring that claimants meet eligibility requirements and preventing improper payments.

In 2023, RESEA received \$1,703,082.00 in federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, in anticipation of serving 6,600 Rhode Islanders.

## 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 67 initial UCFE claims in 2023, with a total of \$307,171 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 2023, there were 56 initial UCX claims, with a net payment of \$477,098.

## 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 2023, the Department received 51,324 TDI claims, a decrease of 1,358 from 2022, and issued 378,418 payments. Payments totaled \$239,534,900, with an average weekly benefit amount of \$633 (\$25 higher than in 2022). The average claim duration was 11.3 weeks, an increase of 0.4 percent from 2022.

The TDI program is financed entirely by workers who are protected by the program. 434,000 total workers were paying TDI taxes in 2023. The TDI Trust Fund had an income of \$251,720,442, and expenditures totaled \$258,361,606. The year-end fund balance was \$115,098,606.

**“ The average claim duration was 11.3 weeks, an increase of 0.4 percent from 2022. ”**

## 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. In 2023, TCI provided up to six weeks of benefits (up from five weeks in 2022) for individuals taking time out of work to bond with a new child or care for an ill family member.

As in 2022, many Rhode Islanders used the TCI program in 2023 to care for family members who were impacted by COVID-19. The Department received 14,199 total TCI claims in 2023 and issued 40,535 payments. The total amount of payments was \$27,718,664 – with an average weekly benefit amount of \$684 (\$34 higher than in 2022). The average claim duration was 4.5 weeks.



## 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 22,898 adjudication decisions in 2023. Of these decisions, 12,210 involved separation issues, meaning that the circumstances of the job termination were in question. 42.6% of separation-related claims resulted in the denial of UI benefits.

Additionally, 10,688 decisions involved non-separation issues, which relate to standard qualifications or continued eligibility (such as evidence of work or availability for work). 92.3% 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 2023, the UI/TDI Fraud Unit investigated 82 overpayment cases and detected \$979,510 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. \$1,289,910 was recovered in UI overpayments.

The Department's Legal Division criminally prosecuted 31 UI fraud cases in 2023, with \$456,502 in restitution ordered.

Additionally, the Department continues to use 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 because of the 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 and party responsible for the error. In 2023, the BAM sample of 247 claims in Rhode Island found that 53.95% of claims were paid properly, whereas 46.05% were overpaid, and 0.92% were underpaid. Full results can be found on the U.S. Department of Labor website.

## 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 fund remits a monthly annuity to the surviving spouse and each dependent child until they reach the age of 18. In 2023, there were 178 recipients of police officers' annuity benefits, totaling \$672,050 and there were 638 recipients of firefighters' annuity benefits, totaling \$2,345,250.

The Police Officers' and Firefighters' Relief Funds also offer tuition payment for permanently disabled police officers and firefighters, as well as the dependents of deceased or permanently disabled police officers and firefighters, at any Rhode Island state college or university. Fourteen dependents received tuition benefits from the Police Officers' Relief Fund, as well as 30 dependents and 1 firefighter who received tuition benefits from the Firefighters' Relief Fund. The total tuition expenditures were \$164,070 for the Police Officers' Relief Fund and \$370,402 for the Firefighters' Relief Fund.



## Employer Tax

The **Employer Tax Section** processes all Quarterly Tax and Wage Reports (Form TX-17) and accompanying tax payments, submitted by Rhode Island employers. These payments include all required Employment Security (ES), Job Development Fund (JDF), and Temporary Disability Insurance Taxes (TDI).

The primary goal of the Employer Tax Section is to provide and account for the funding needed to pay Unemployment Insurance benefits to eligible jobless workers, and Temporary Disability Insurance benefits to eligible workers idled by non-work-related injury or illness. These programs provide economic stability to workers, families, communities, and the Rhode Island economy.

## Employer Security Tax

Employers pay this tax (ES) to fund benefits for workers during periods of unemployment. Contributions collected from Rhode Island employers under this tax are used exclusively to pay benefits to unemployed workers. Each employer pays contributions at an assigned rate and the rate is applied to the applicable wage base as determined yearly. There is also an additional \$1,500 added to the normal taxable wage base for employers that are assigned the highest rate. In 2023, the WorkShare program averted 362 layoffs at 60 Rhode Island companies. The Department received 1,326 initial WorkShare claims and issued 19,103 payments. In comparison, in 2022 the Department received 1,172 initial claims and issued 15,829 payments.

## Experience Rating

The system for determining each individual employer's tax rate is known as experience rating. It considers both the employer's experience with insured unemployment and the size of the employer's taxable payroll. An employer must have had at least three consecutive experience years to be eligible for experience rating. An experience year is the twelve-month period from October 1 through the following September 30, during which contributions have been credited to the employer's account and benefits have been chargeable to that account. A series of nine experience rating schedules have been set by law under which employer rates can range from a low of 0.6% in Schedule A to a high of 10.0% in Schedule I. At the close of each experience year (September 30), the ending balance in each employer's account is divided by the employer's average annual taxable payroll over the last three years ending on the preceding June 30. The result, expressed as a percentage, becomes the employer's account reserve percentage. This percentage is used to determine the actual tax rate to be assigned to the employer, in accordance with the Tax Schedule in effect for the following calendar year. For 2024, tax rate Schedule G is in effect.

## New Employer

A new employer (one who has been subject to the provisions of the Employment Security Act for less than three full experience years) will be assigned a rate based on the State's five-year benefit cost rate for employers not eligible for any experience. This new employer rate is computed each year and must be at least 1% but cannot be more than 4.2%.

The 2024 new employer rate is 1.00% (This includes JDF) and the taxable wage base is \$29,200. For employers at the highest tax rate, the UI taxable wage base is set \$1,500 higher and will be \$30,700 in 2024.

## Successor Employers

A “successor employer” is any employer who acquires a business, or substantially all assets of a business, which was required to pay Employment Security, Temporary Disability Insurance, and Job Development Fund. If the successor employer is new, they will be assigned the experience rating history of the former owner. If the successor employer was already in business at the time of acquisition, then their own experience rating will be combined with that of the predecessor and a new rate will be calculated. For partial successor determinations, any portion of the business of its predecessor shall have its rate determined based on its own unemployment experience combined with that portion of the predecessor’s unemployment experience attributable to the share of the trade or business transferred to the successor.

## Limited Liability Companies (LLCs)

LLCs are taxed for RI Employer Tax purposes according to their filing status with the IRS. Members of an LLC will be treated for RI Employer Tax purposes as partners of a partnership if the LLC qualifies as and elects to be a partnership for federal income tax purposes. An LLC may elect if it qualifies to be taxed for federal income tax purposes as a corporation, and any remuneration to members will be reportable and taxable for RI Employer Tax purposes. A single member, who is an individual, who elects to be taxed for federal income tax purposes as a sole proprietor will be treated as a sole proprietor for RI Employer Tax purposes. If the single member of an LLC or the members of an LLC partnership are corporations, any remuneration to corporate officers will be reportable and taxable for RI Employer Tax purposes.



## Exemptions

- The law exempts certain types of workers from both UI and TDI/TCI coverage. A list of these exemptions is provided below:
- An owner of a business who is the sole proprietor or married to the sole proprietor.
- Children under the age of 18 who are working for their parent who is sole proprietor.
- Parents working for their son or daughter who is the sole proprietor of a business.
- Partners in a business operating as a partnership.
- Students working at a school, college, or a university where they are enrolled and regularly attending classes.
- A licensed real estate salesperson who is paid entirely on commission.
- Insurance brokers, agents, and sub-agents (other than industrial or debit agents) paid entirely on commission.
- Employees of a church, church convention, or association of churches, or in a religious organization, that is operated, supervised, controlled, and principally supported by a church or association of churches.
- Duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of churches in the exercise of their ministries, or members of religious orders in the exercise of duties required by such orders.
- Students enrolled in nonprofit or public schools with regular faculties and curriculums, and who are in accredited, full-time programs combining academic instruction with work experience. Schools must certify to the employer that such employment is an integral part of the academic program.
- The operating crew of a fishing boat with a normal crew of less than ten persons whose sole remuneration is a share of the catch.
- Workers performing services as members of an AmeriCorps program.

## Job Development Fund Tax

Job Development assessment (JDF) 0.21%.

Employers pay an assessment of 0.21% to support job training, counseling, and assessment services to promote workforce development and business development as established by the Governor's Workforce Board. The taxable wage base for the JDF assessment is the same as the applicable wage base for the ES tax.

Both the ES tax and the JDF assessment are imposed on the employer.

## Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI)/Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI)

TDI and TCI are financed entirely by employee payroll deductions and are not incurred by the employer. The current withholding rate for 2024 is 1.2% of the first \$87,000 in taxable wages. Workers aged 14 and 15 are exempt from wage deductions and coverage. If you worked for more than one RI employer in a calendar year and your total wages were more than \$84,000 (in 2023), you may be entitled to a TDI tax refund.

TDI provides benefit payments for up to 30 weeks to insured RI workers for weeks of unemployment caused by a temporary disability or injury. Enacted in 1942, TDI was the first of its kind in the United States. It protects workers against wage loss resulting from a non-work-related illness or injury and is funded exclusively by Rhode Island workers.

TCI was signed into law on July 11, 2013. TCI provides eligible claimants up to 6 weeks of caregiver benefits to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, domestic partner, parent, parent-in-law, or grandparent, or to bond with a newborn child, new adopted child, or new foster-care child.

## Exemptions from TDI Only:

Workers whose religion depends on prayer or other spiritual means for healing may refuse TDI coverage by filing an affidavit with the Director of the Employer Tax unit, RI Division of Taxation, and their employer. No deductions will be made from their salary for TDI.

Minors 14 or 15 years of age are exempt from the provisions of the TDI regulations. No deductions should be made from their salary for TDI. They are covered for Unemployment Insurance.

State and local government employees (unless their employers elect to have them covered).

Disabled persons employed through a “supported employment” program may elect an exemption.

## Employer Tax’s Financial Review for 2023

<b>Total Deposits:</b>	<b>\$511,748,516.03</b>	
ES Deposits:	\$250,114,382.95	(Excludes P&I)
ES P&I:	\$1,664,755.08	
JDF Deposit:	\$21,461,135.31	(Includes P&I)
TDI Deposit:	\$238,508,242.69	(Includes P&I)
Employer Tax’s Collection Department brought in \$16,121,621.94 of the total deposits received.		

## Employer Tax Accomplishments During 2023

Employer Tax has made improvements to its audit program which helped identify and access worker misclassification. Employer Tax has updated its audit assignment report with an emphasis on focusing on industries where worker misclassification is prevalent. We have also begun the process of re-auditing employers, whose past audits, have resulted in successful identification of worker misclassification. These efforts resulted in RI passing the Field Audit Effective Measure this year. RI was the only state in our region to pass the Field Audit Effective Measure and was one of only 14 states Nationwide. RI presented at the last Quarterly Regional Director Conference, in Albany NY on our methods used to accomplish our goal of passing this difficult measure.

For the first time in Employer Tax History, employers were able to access their Unemployment Rate online through Employer Tax’s Online application. This huge accomplishment was something the employers have been asking for and Employer Tax was able to deliver on this request this year.

In efforts to lessen taxpayer overpayments and underpayments, process changes and updates were made within the Employer Tax operation that resulted in lessening the workload in our collections and accounts and control departments, which have been significantly understaffed this year. We started by analyzing our current refund process, reviewed the refund list to identify trends, worked on solutions to reduce the amount of refunds, and made the process less manual and time-consuming. These solutions included improving communication with major payroll



companies, form changes to our Tax Rate Notice to include a statement with recommendations to help taxpayers ensure their filings are completed correctly, and working with Tyler Technologies to include messaging on our online website to encourage taxpayers to use our online filing system and to check their current tax rate before filing.

In 2023 and into 2024, Employer Tax is focused on creating a more robust website that will include modernized tax forms and documents for employers to easily access and utilize. This has included making forms fillable, while also creating new forms and modernizing our current forms. Employer Tax is also in the process of making our FAQs more robust. This is scheduled to be completed in the First Quarter of 2024.

Employer Tax like other DLT agencies has been working with IBM to identify requirements for our department for a new system to replace our current mainframe system and automate some of our manual processes.



# 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. 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. 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 Division collaborates remotely with industry stakeholders, national standards bodies, and counterpart agencies.

For more information and resources, please visit [dlt.ri.gov/wc](https://dlt.ri.gov/wc).

## Workers' Compensation Claims

The number of workplace injuries decreased by 11.1% from 2022. In 2023, there were 4,969 reported indemnity injuries – meaning that the worker was paid weekly benefits – and 9,557 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 20, constituting roughly 0.1% of the overall volume. New filings were 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 22 self-insured employers in 2023.

## 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. We have continued with our quarterly medical trainings.

The Education Unit has a dedicated information line to field questions regarding workers' compensation or workforce health and safety. In 2023, the Education Unit received over 4,000 telephone calls to the information line as well as over 600 emails. This is the unit responsible for providing documents according to records requests and subpoenas.

## 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 2023, the Unit investigated 5,680 compliance cases and 10 fraud cases. We saw a significant increase in the number of employers penalized for failing to carry workers' compensation insurance from 162 to 220. Of these violations for the lack of insurance, 161 came into compliance and were penalized in-house for a total of \$184,072.85, of which \$132,222.97 has already been collected. The number of petitions filed in the Workers' Compensation Court for civil prosecutions increased slightly to 59. This resulted in \$132,443.40 in restitution ordered, of which \$125,917.28 has been collected.

One of the strongest tools the Unit leverages for employer compliance is the Immediate Stop Work Order. In 2020 our process changed from serving a notice to attend a hearing for Lack of Insurance to an Immediate shutdown of the business until they come into compliance. In 2023, the Unit issued 32 Immediate SWOs. As in previous years, most businesses that are closed immediately obtain coverage, and the order is lifted to allow them to re-open. The average business that is closed by the Division remains closed for only one day. Employers have the right to appeal the Stop Work Order to the Workers' Compensation Court. One business exercised this right in 2023.

Of the 10 Fraud cases we investigated, only 1 was referred to the Attorney General for prosecution. This case was charged, and restitution was paid to the insurer. There was also a resolution of one prior year filing that resulted in restitution being ordered and paid in full.

Since the Department is the Record Keeper for Workers' Compensation, it is vital that our records are reflective of the entire claim. The starting point is the First Report of Injury (FROI). Without that document our data is flawed. There is a \$250 penalty for failing to file the FROI within the statutory time frame. In 2023, we penalized 61 employers/carriers for violations regarding the FROI and collected \$10,250.00 in penalties.

In addition to penalizing employers for failing to have workers' compensation insurance coverage or failing to file the FROI, the Unit also penalizes insurance carriers for failing to report active coverage, also within the statutory time frame. In 2023, 824 carrier penalties were issued, resulting in fines of \$206,000, of which \$143,500.00 was collected.

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 2023, the legislature changed the filing process of the DWC-11-IC (Independent Contractor Form) from one time to annually. A lot of work was done to ensure that the forms were correct, and the programming would now pick up an expiration date on the IC forms (DWC-11-IC). We also worked to restructure our internal processes to ensure a smooth transition to an annual filing. The Unit processed 3,984 independent contractor forms. We have also made our online form and instructions available for our Spanish-speaking contractors to ensure they understand what they are filing.



## 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, 2023, the balance in the UPF was \$923,087.09. The UPF received 14 applications for claims in 2023 and made payments in the amount of \$64,777.83. received 11 applications for claims in 2022 and made payments in the amount of \$104,600.12.

## Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)

The **Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)** a mandated assessment of 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 2023, there were 533 requests for reimbursement from the WCAF and \$\$803,926.20 in total reimbursements.

## Arrigan Center

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.

In 2023, the Arrigan Center received 1,096 referrals for treatment resulting in 1,511 total treatments for all patients as patients typically participate in several disciplines during their admission. Of the 1,096 referrals, 579 completed treatments, and 431 of them were noted to demonstrate increased functionality. 254 of them patients returned to gainful employment.

Arrigan Center Treatment Activity 2023	
<b>Total Treatments for all patients*</b>	<b>1,511</b>
<b>Functional Capacity Evaluations</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Therapeutic Treatment (All programs)</b>	<b>827</b>
Evaluation Only	114
Completed Treatment	579
Did Not Complete Treatment	134
In Treatment at the Time of Data Collection	129
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	<b>139</b>
Completed Program	124
Did Not Complete Program	15
<b>Chronic Pain Management</b>	<b>135</b>
Evaluation Only	1,611
Completed Treatment	3,643
Did Not Complete Treatment	1,527
In Treatment at the Time of Data Collection	1,614
<i>*Patients typically participate in several disciplines during treatment. Subsequently, the number of total treatments (1,273) is higher than the total number of individuals receiving treatment (642).</i>	



# Workforce Regulation and Safety

The **Workforce Regulation and Safety Division** is charged with enforcing the safety laws that protect Rhode Island’s workforce, including a 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 2023, the staff worked diligently to perform their tasks, to minimize the disruption of services to the public. This involved performing investigations, inspections, and conducting trade license examinations.

For more information and resources, please visit [dlt.ri.gov/wrs](https://dlt.ri.gov/wrs).

## Workplace Fraud Unit

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

In, 2023, there were 670 claims filed. 519 claims were closed in 2023, and 356 claims were still in process at the time of the reporting. During 2023, 54 prevailing wage cases were filed and \$346,606 was recovered in back wages and penalties.

## Professional Regulation

The **Professional Regulation Unit** is responsible for testing and licensing several technical occupations and regulates all registered Apprenticeship Programs in Rhode Island.

Trade Licensing Activity 2023	
<b>Examinations Performed</b>	<b>3,917</b>
<b>Licenses (issued or renewed)</b>	<b>35,372</b>
Electrician	8,289
Hoisting Engineer	9,649
Pipefitter, Refrigeration Technician, Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitter, Sheet Metal Worker	7,754
Telecommunication	4,583
Plumbers and Irrigators	2,204
Burglar Alarm	2,893

The **Trade Licensing Section** licensed 35,372 technical professionals in 2023, 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.

## Apprenticeship Section

The **Apprenticeship Section** registers, regulates, and provides technical assistance to training programs in which an apprentice receives technical instruction while employed in a full-time occupation, thereby achieving wage gains and a nationally recognized Apprenticeship Completion Certificate. The proven success of the registered apprenticeship training model has been recognized by many industries seeking to build a skilled workforce. There were 538 program sponsors and 2336 active registered apprentices at the close of 2023. The Apprenticeship Section processed 1084 new apprentice registrations, 424 apprentice cancelations, and 427 apprenticeship completions in 2023.



The Apprentice Section is the state registration agency fulfilling state responsibilities under the USDOL Registered Apprenticeship System. The Apprentice Section convenes the State Apprenticeship Council to review new program submissions and advise the department on Registered Apprenticeship matters. The Apprentice Section oversees training activities in licensed trades, such as electricians, non-licensed construction trades, such as roofers, and all other apprentice-able occupations. In 2023, 75% of apprenticeship completions awarded were in construction trades and 25% in occupations beyond construction. The USDOL awarded RIDLT a competitive 4-year grant starting in July 2022 and a 1-year formula expansion grant in 2023 to continue the Apprenticeship RI partnership with a non-profit intermediary, Building Futures. This work will continue technical assistance to support sponsors and participating Rhode Island employers with program quality, diversity, equity, and inclusion.



## 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 to work and live in.

In 2023, the Elevator Section performed 4,000 inspections and issued 3,526 certificates of operation. One Hundred Seventy-Four (174) permits for new installations and 197 licenses were granted. The Elevator Section also issued 3,429 violation letters. In 2023, The Boiler Section issued 6,286 Certificates of Operation and conducted 7,376 inspections. Two Hundred Fifty (250) permits were granted for new installations, and 90 commission licenses were issued.





# Workforce Development Services

The **Workforce Development Services (WDS) Division** is dedicated to the support and advancement of all who comprise the workforce system: those who perform the work and those who hire them. The division oversees a variety of programs that guide job seekers to sustainable career paths and introduce employers to qualified workers.

Nearly four years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the labor market and accompanying service paradigms aligned with the workforce system. Emerging from the pandemic crisis, WDS recognized the need to adjust service delivery to meet the needs of the Rhode Island workforce system, and accordingly, set a course to develop new strategies, models, and technological interventions to better serve the community. Many of these enhancements, which include a combination of virtual connectivity tools, accessibility improvements, and use of advanced analytics, were stood up in late 2021, refined in 2022, and have become an integral component of workforce system operations in 2023. WDS continues to offer services both virtually and in-person through a flexible service model that aims to improve access and better prepare job seekers to meet the demands of today's technological world.

The WDS Division remains a core partner in the state's three American Job Centers—the local centers of the national network of American Job Center's CareerOne Stop locations in Rhode Island. Two of these three American Job Centers were remodeled or relocated in 2023, resulting in new cutting-edge facilities and accessible spaces reflective of customer-centric service and universal access. In 2023, American Job Centers served 4,371 job seekers through the employment service delivery system, including 4,105 unemployed individuals. Additionally, the division served 339 unique employers. WDS also continued to pilot the community-affiliate career center model comprised of smaller job centers housed in community organizations within local areas of opportunity throughout the state. In 2023, American Job Center team members co-located at the Woonsocket Education Center, where staff aimed to increase the recognition and level of access to the workforce system, providing career services in a venue and environment connected to the local community.

Through multiple modalities, WDS also provides services to un/underemployed individuals via the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program. This federal program aims to reduce the unemployment insurance duration of claimants to facilitate gainful and sustainable employment. In 2023, 6848 individuals were selected to participate in the RESEA program.

For more information and resources, please visit

<https://dlt.ri.gov/individuals/jobseeker-resources-2024>.



## WIOA

The **Workforce Development Services Division** supports programs under Title IB of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Governor’s Workforce Board disburses WIOA Title IB 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. In 2023, the state remained dedicated to refining policies aimed at enhancing services under WIOA Title 1B. WIOA Title 1B training services, for example, can be provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). To broaden access, one LWDB increased its Individual Training Account (ITA) funding to a limit of \$15,000 (nearly double previous limits), which was a key measure to advance opportunity for WIOA Title 1B training. In addition, WIOA-funded training and other services may be made available to employed individuals if, among other criteria, their current employment does not provide for economic self-sufficiency. In state guidance approved in 2023, economic self-sufficiency was reinterpreted as employment that pays 175% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL), an increase of 75%, which was a significant adjustment aimed at broadening eligibility and supporting underemployed Rhode Islanders and those most in need. 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 2023, there were 196 adults, 208 dislocated workers, and 632 youth participants 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 include but are not limited to, educational and occupational training, on-the-job training, job search and relocation allowances, income support, and other reemployment services. In 2023, there were 23 TAA program participants served, with 14 enrolled in various trainings. Additionally, multiple Trade-impacted workers were presented with information regarding workforce training and re-employment opportunities through on-site and virtual events tailored to their needs. These events were provided throughout the months leading up to the worker’s separation from the trade-impacted employer.

The termination provision under Section 285(a) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, went into effect on July 1, 2022, and as such, the TAA program operated in a phase-





out termination status in 2023. Under this status, the US Department of Labor cannot investigate new Trade petitions, but clients covered under previously approved petitions may continue to access services. Services can be provided in any of the American Job Centers or on the Virtual Career Center, and as such, Workforce Development Services continued outreach efforts and case management for those employees certified under an existing approved condition. Even though new petitions filed cannot be investigated or certified by the US Department of Labor (unless the TAA Program is reauthorized), Workforce Development Services remains committed to submitting petitions on behalf of workers separated from their employment due to foreign competition.

## Vets Services Unit

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

Within the Veterans Service Unit, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans with priority in the provision of services, while Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) staff conduct outreach to employers to assist veterans in obtaining employment and facilitate those aligned services. To enhance and support service delivery in 2023 and beyond, the division created a new position that combines DVOP/LVER staff duties into one role aimed at promoting effective service administration and collaboration. In 2023, the Veterans Service Unit has continued to maintain its presence as a resource for Veterans serving 68 participants in total and working to obtain unsubsidized employment outcomes through collaboration with a variety of community organizations and partners.

## Rapid Response

The **Rapid Response Program** proactively assists with all cycles of business health, from rapid growth and direct recruitment to layoffs and plant closings, by quickly coordinating services and aiding companies and employees, 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 Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, outlining American Job Centers' reemployment services, and reviewing available training opportunities. Other services include coordinating job fairs, ensuring hiring visibility, and offering

customized reemployment workshops, such as resumé development and interviewing strategies. Staff also collaborated with Health Source RI to provide impacted workers with healthcare resources, and the US Department of Labor contributed to the Rapid Response presentation by providing Social Security/Retirement information for those considering retirement.

In 2023, the Rapid Response team accelerated employer outreach efforts through proactive and reactive strategies. The team facilitated workshops, including resume workshops, hiring events, and traditional events which included health care information, workforce services, and retirement information to educate and assist impacted employees about employment and wrap-around services available to them. In total throughout the year, the Division delivered 49 Rapid Response events to assist with employee transitions in multiple Rhode Island industries, including manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade. The in-person and virtual workshops offered information and resources in English, Spanish, and ASL.

In addition, the division hosted 108 virtual and in-person job fairs and employer recruitment opportunities with 65 employers from across the state at our local American Job Centers, employer sites, and through our virtual platform. The team also collaborated with various Job Fairs throughout the state focusing on jobs for under-resourced community groups, such as Refugee populations.



## WOTC

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. Workforce Development Services administers the application process for WOTC requests received from employers, however, all tax-related benefits of the WOTC program are entirely the purview of the United States Department of Treasury through the Internal Revenue Service.

Rhode Island received 16,859 WOTC applications in 2023. WOTC certified 5,345 applications which provided RI employers with a potential \$22,558,4000 for hiring new employees.

## Foreign Labor

The **Foreign Labor Certification (FLC)** process enables employers to hire foreign workers who have been pre-authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to temporarily live and work in the United States through the H-2A and H-2B guest visa programs. However, to qualify, a business must demonstrate its inability to fill the position with a qualified citizen at prevailing wages. The Department guides the employer in complying with U.S. Department of Labor regulations and requirements, offers training on placing job orders through the State Job Board, EmployRI, reviews job orders for compliance with content requirements, and monitors the appropriate referral of domestic workers. DLT is dedicated to the protection of and advocacy for America’s workforce, including guest workers and migrants, who historically have been a disadvantaged demographic.

Farmworkers who meet the federal definition of migrant and/or seasonal outlined in 20 CFR 651.10 are served by the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) program, which assists with making career and labor market decisions that can help them achieve economic self-sufficiency while improving their living and working conditions. DLT’s dedicated, multilingual, MSFW Outreach Worker is aware of and sensitive to, socio-economic and cultural issues faced by agricultural communities. In-person outreach activities foster and reinforce beneficial relationships between farmworkers, farmers, non-profit organizations, and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) reviews the delivery of services and protections afforded by Rhode Island’s three American Job Center (AJC) offices. AJCs are monitored for compliance with federal regulations, to ensure that MSFWs receive services that are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to those provided to all other job seekers. Regular field visits and annual migrant housing inspections are performed at all farms that host H-2A workers.

# Governor's Workforce Board





The **Governor's Workforce Board (GWB)** was established under RI General Laws (R.I.G.L.) § 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 allocation of the RI Job Development Fund (JDF), the federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and other funding sources when available.

The Board consists of twenty-three (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.

During 2023, the GWB administered over \$50M in investments in support of the Governor's vision to create an integrated workforce, education, and economic development system, which includes:

- Expanding effective industry sector-driven programs such as Real Jobs Rhode Island;
- Increasing the utilization of 'earn and learn' models such as On-the-Job Training and Registered Apprenticeship; and
- Reaching the small and micro businesses most in need of workforce services.

The Board also increased investments and expanded programs to deliver work-based learning and career exploration opportunities for youth.

In administering all these investments, the Board prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion across all program policies and monitored utilization by age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography, business size, and other indicators available.

For additional details on the programs within the Governor's Workforce Board, please visit the Governor's Workforce Board at [gwb.ri.gov](http://gwb.ri.gov).

## **Small Grant Programs for Employers**

The GWB administers the following small grant programs to help meet the workforce needs of local employers:

### **Apprenticeship Initiatives and Incentives**

The Non-Trade Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Program was created in R.I.G.L. § 42-102-11 to help organizations pay for the design and development of new and innovative apprenticeship tracks by providing reimbursement for eligible planning activities and costs up to \$25,000. Following a period of closure during the pandemic, the program was relaunched in August 2023 with a streamlined, rolling application and granting process. It is funded by RI General Revenue and is now available year-round. The GWB also administers a Non-Trade Apprenticeship Incentive Program pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-102-13. In 2023, 29 employers utilized the incentive for a total of 65 apprentices.

### **Incumbent Worker Training Grants**

The Incumbent Worker Training Grant Program is designed to help employers remain competitive and help workers maintain and advance in their careers. It provides eligible employers with a 50% or 75% reimbursement for eligible costs on eligible training activities up to \$30,000 per calendar year. The program is funded using the Rhode Island Job Development Fund and served over 90 employers in 2023.

## Nursing Facility Training Grants

The Nursing Facility Training Grant Program was established in 2022, under R.I.G.L. § 23-17.5-36. It is designed to help licensed nursing facilities provide enhanced healthcare training for employees and improve the quality of care for patients. Facilities must be compliant with the minimum staffing requirements of R.I.G.L. § 23-17.5-32. In 2023, 5 licensed nursing facilities utilized the program.

## Work Immersion

Work Immersion is an internship support program available to Rhode Island employers. It was established under R.I.G.L. § 42-102-11 and is designed to boost the employment prospects of new and returning workers (i.e., eligible students and unemployed or underemployed adults) through meaningful paid work experiences. It provides employers with a 50% or 75% reimbursement for wages paid to participants for up to 400 hours of work. In 2023, over 140 employers utilized Work Immersion to support 400+ interns or newly hired workers.

## Workplace Accessibility Grants

The Workplace Accessibility Grant Program is a new initiative established by the GWB to promote employment and economic opportunity for individuals with disabilities through investment in accessible workplaces. The program provides a 100% reimbursement for eligible costs up to \$5,000 per calendar year to businesses with fewer than twenty-five (25) employees. The program is funded using the Rhode Island Job Development Fund and launched in April 2023, with 4 employers utilizing this grant.





## WIOA Title 1B Programs

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the primary federal law that provides resources to states to help jobseekers access employment, education, training, and support services, and to match employers with the skilled workforce they need. WIOA requires each state to have a State Workforce Development Board that distributes funds down to local workforce development boards and the GWB fulfills this role. In 2023, there were approximately 150 adults, 177 dislocated workers, and 594 youth served in Rhode Island under WIOA Title IB.

## Real Jobs Rhode Island

**Real Jobs RI** is a demand-driven workforce development initiative that supports partnerships consisting of employers, training providers, and community-based organizations to address specific workforce needs and challenges. Solutions can include:

- Placing new employees into immediate job openings;
- Upskilling current employees to advance skills and/or remain competitive;
- Helping business owners and entrepreneurs advance their ventures;
- Creating pipelines of talent for the future.

RJRI 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. The program currently has sixty (60) partnerships offering a diverse variety of training and placement services. During FY23, the program enrolled and served 7,786 participants including 3,845 jobseekers, 2,691 incumbent workers, 967 business owners or entrepreneurs, and 283 students.

# Youth Programs and Initiatives

In 2023, the GWB continued to expand its youth career readiness initiatives and investments with an elevated focus on career exploration through the following efforts:

## Real Skills for Youth

Real Skills for Youth is centered around the goal of preparing youth ages 14-24 for success in college and career through meaningful career exposure and work-based learning. The program funds regional partnerships consisting of schools, youth-serving community-based organizations (CBOs), and employers to develop and implement high-quality career exploration activities and paid work-based learning experiences. For many youth participants, this programming provides the first immersive experience in the world of work. Through service-learning projects, internships, school-based enterprises, apprenticeships, or industry projects, students complete a minimum of 80 hours for a robust work experience that is coupled with extensive work-readiness training including resume development, interview prep, and financial literacy. In 2023, the program worked with 21 partnerships and served over 3,000 youth participants across the state.

## Career Exploration Equity Grants

During 2023, the GWB developed a Career Exploration Equity Grant program for schools and community-based organizations (CBOs). The program aims to support equitable access to high-quality career exploration activities for youth and young adults and provides 100% reimbursement for eligible costs up to \$5,000 per calendar year. The Board allocated \$100,000 from the Rhode Island Job Development Fund to launch the program in FY24 and began accepting and approving program applications and approving grant awards in July 2023.





## **PrepareRI 8th Grade Statewide Career Exploration Fair (JA Inspire)**

Partly funded with GWB state funds, and in collaboration with Prepare RI, the Warren Alpert Foundation, the RI Foundation, Citizens Bank, and other stakeholders, Junior Achievement executed a 3-day, in-person career fair. Over 5,500 8th graders from 33 schools across several districts participated in the career fair after completing a preparatory 6-week curriculum in their respective classrooms. With over 90 exhibitor booths for students to visit during the experience, youth interacted with employers that represented an array of industries including but not limited to public law enforcement, health and human services, construction, culinary, marine trades, computer science, and more. Students also got to engage in robust conversations with high school students from over 10 Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools to bolster CTE enrollment for the start of the 24-25 academic year.

## **Prepare RI High School Summer Internship Program**

With the continued support of the GWB, American Student Assistance, and other funding sources, the Prepare RI High School Summer Internship Program wrapped up its sixth year of operation. Spearheaded by Skills for Rhode Island's Future, the program delivers robust and engaging in-person internships for rising high school seniors. Over three hundred and fifty (350) youth completed their summer internship experiences with over 90 employers across various industry sectors in 2023.

## **Voluntary Extension of Care**

The Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) Program was established under R.I.G.L. § 14-1-6 and provides housing, healthcare, financial support, and career counseling services to former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who have not achieved permanency. The program is administered by the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) Team at the RI Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Throughout 2023, the GWB met with parties including DCYF, the RI Family Court, and other workforce system partners to discuss the employment and training needs of VEC participants and provide tactical support under RIGL § 42-102-10.1. Through several programs including WIOA and RJRI, the GWB facilitates the delivery of impactful career services for VEC participants.

# Impact stories



**“This program not only saved my life, it changed my life.”**

- Carlos Mendez, Building Futures  
2023 Graduate



Leslyan in the Summer 2023  
DCD-Design Build Program

**Leslyn** began participating in DownCity Design’s (DCD) free afterschool programs as a junior in high school. She was a participant in their Summer Design/Build internship program for 2 consecutive summers. Lesly collaborated with other teens to create 4 service projects, including an outdoor classroom for Young Woods Elementary School, a community garden for Gilbert Stuart Middle School, and planter beds for the Saint Martin de Porres Senior Center.

Lesly took on every new opportunity that came her way with a positive attitude and determined drive. Having discovered a love of mechanical systems while at DCD, she decided to pursue a career in Engineering, and recently graduated from college with a BS in Engineering. Lesly loved the DCD summer program so much that she returned to serve as a full-time Teaching Assistant for the program each summer while attending Smith!

**DownCity Design** is a non-profit community design organization that empowers young people to strengthen their communities by harnessing the creative power of design. Their workforce development programs train Providence County youth to create structures, graphics, and products that respond creatively to challenges and opportunities in their communities while introducing them to viable career pathways in design, manufacturing, and construction.



**Crossroads Rhode Island** graduated its 150th CNA Job Training Program in June 2023. Through CNA education and training, Crossroads equips housing-insecure or at-risk individuals with the skills and knowledge to pass the state licensure exam and launch fulfilling careers as Certified Nursing Assistants. The mission of Crossroads Rhode Island is to help homeless or at-risk individuals and families secure stable homes, through a range of services including housing, basic needs, shelter, case management, referrals, and education and employment services.



**Dylan** enrolled at CCAP in 2020 as a summer employment participant. He participated in the first ever Construction cohort in 2022 and was enrolled in Youth WIOA in July 2022. He was looking for training in the welding field and he was matched with his CATCTC instructor Ryan Ingerowski.

Today, he works as a pipefitter at Electric Boat and volunteers his personal time to assist the instructor and mentor students in the Real Skills for Youth Summer Program.

“I learned a lot of skills in this program and want the next generation to do the same.” --Dylan

**Comprehensive Community Action Program’s (CCAP)** overall objective is to provide high-quality career exploration, work readiness training, and work-based learning activities preparing for success in career/employment for Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, and Kent County area youth ages 14-24. In their 6-week summer CTE Welding cohort at Cranston Area Career and Tech Center (CACTC), youth, aged 14-17, are introduced to several key facets of the welding trade, with an emphasis on personal protective equipment use and personal safety.



# Office of Community Engagement



The **Office of Community Engagement (OCE)** leads the Department's commitment and strategy to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization, both internally and externally in serving the public. The mission of the OCE is to build meaningful, two-way relationships with community representatives to ensure that all DLT services and programs are accessible, inclusive, and equitably distributed; with a focus on eliminating barriers and promoting access for marginalized populations.

The OCE works across agency divisions and with outside community stakeholders to:

- Identify and eliminate barriers to fair treatment and quality services for clients;
- Establish diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals for all public-facing services provided by the Department;
- Share best practices in equitable delivery of services; and
- Ensure that the Department internally implements equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive practices.



In April 2023, the OCE launched a new Community Engagement Partners initiative to better serve all Rhode Islanders. The following 25 organizations were selected to advise the agency 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. Each grantee is funded up to \$15,000 for 12 months of performance (\$12,000 payment for deliverables and up to \$3,000 reimbursement for materials and supplies). The Community Engagement Partners are:

- Amos House
- The Autism Project
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence
- Cape Verdean American Community Development
- Center for Southeast Asians
- Crossroads Rhode Island
- Foster Forward
- Fuerza Laboral
- Genesis Center
- Justice Assistance
- Multicultural Innovation Center
- New Bridges for Haitian Success (NB4HS)
- Newport Community School
- Oasis International
- Progreso Latino
- Providence Public Library
- Refugee Dream Center
- Revive Therapeutic Services
- Rhode Island Black Business Association
- Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning (RIRAL)
- Women's Refugee Care
- Workforce Ready Solutions LLC
- YMCA of Pawtucket
- Youth Moving Forward
- Young Voices

From April to December 2023, the Community Engagement Partners met with OCE staff 6 times and will hold 2 more meetings in early 2024. In those sessions, Community Engagement Partners learned about agency services such as unemployment insurance, workforce development, wage theft and labor laws, and job training programs. Community Engagement Partners helped the DLT to create and then disseminate informational brochures and posters to their clients on those topics. Their clients have reacted positively throughout this information-sharing and expressed appreciation for education about services that they previously did not know existed. The Community Engagement Partners also helped to develop and disseminate a survey to gather information from their clients about the need for and usage of employment and training services; the survey has received over 800 responses at the time of reporting.

OCE office plans to extend contracts for the 25 Community Engagement Partners for a second year and to identify up to 5 new partners for Year Two.



## Equal Opportunity Officer

In late 2022, the OCE office hired a full-time Equal Opportunity Officer. The Equal Opportunity Officer is responsible for State Program-wide coordination of compliance with the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements in WIOA and for the RIDLT. This includes:

- Serving as the liaison with the Civil Rights Center
- Monitoring the DLT's activities and WIOA Title I funding programs
- Reviewing the DLT's written policies to ensure they are nondiscriminatory
- Developing and publishing procedures for processing and tracking discrimination complaints
- Conducting outreach and education about equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements
- Developing and monitoring Language Access initiatives across all programs and activities
- Reestablishing and convening the RIDLT's internal Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee

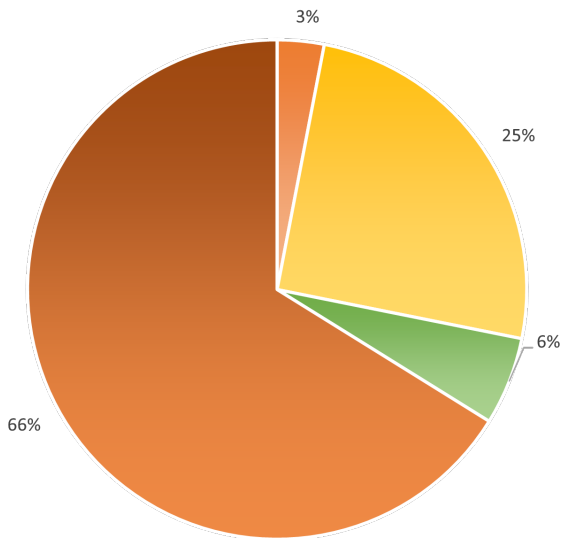
Particularly with Language Access for the unemployment insurance program, the Equal Opportunity Officer has made great progress. The agency now collects preferred language information from all UI claimants and has a process in place for translating vital documents into those preferred languages. Additionally, the DLT is in the process of translating all vital UI documents into Spanish.

# Budgetary Expenditures



### Actual Expenditures 2023

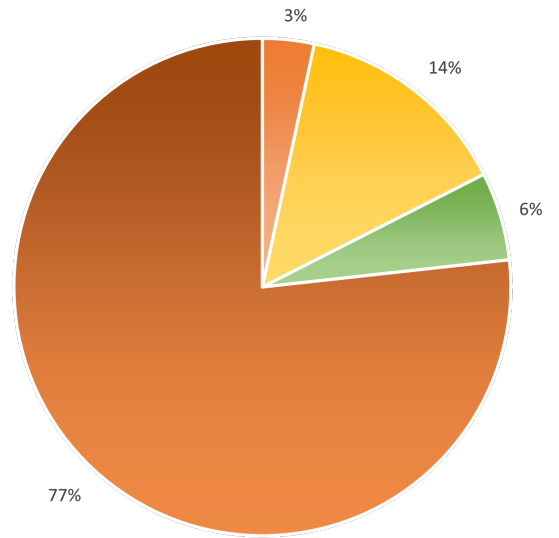
Department Total: \$600,500,627



- General Revenue \$18,204,551
- Federal \$150,859,898
- Restricted Receipts \$34,183,144
- Other \$397,253,034

### Budgeted Expenditures 2024

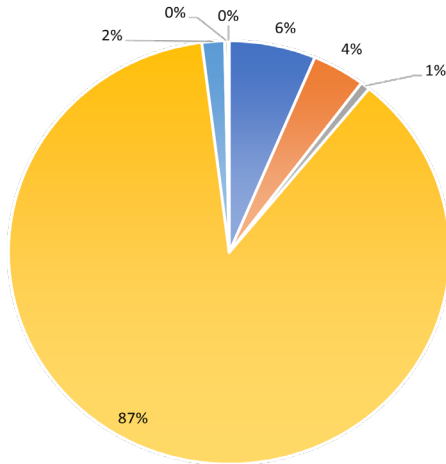
Department Total: \$527,634,032



- General Revenue \$17,697,227
- Federal \$74,703,378
- Restricted Receipts \$30,280,568
- Other \$404,952,859

### Actual Expenditures by Program 2023

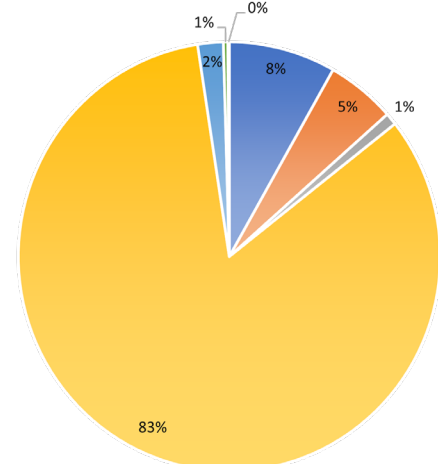
Department Total: \$600,500,627



- Governor's Workforce Board \$38,104,825
- Workforce Development Services \$23,319,775
- Workforce Regulation and Safety \$4,170,939
- Income Support \$522,984,968
- Injured Worker Services \$9,964,383
- Central Management \$1,410,274
- Labor Relations Board \$545,463

### Budgeted Expenditures by Program 2024

Department Total: \$527,634,032



- Governor's Workforce Board \$43,211,583
- Workforce Development Services \$27,842,289
- Workforce Regulation and Safety \$4,828,609
- Income Support \$439,035,244
- Injured Worker Services \$10,320,752
- Central Management \$1,841,623
- Labor Relations Board \$553,932

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