



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Rhode Island Receives \$386K from Federal Department of Labor

CRANSTON – Adelita S. Orefice, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training announced today that approximately \$386,660 in supplemental funding has been awarded to Rhode Island by the Federal Department of Labor. It is part of a federal award to states, strengthening their unemployment compensation systems and computerized security. Director Orefice stated, “These grants enable states to continue upgrading the integrity of their Unemployment Insurance systems.”

Raymond Filippone, Assistant Director of Income Support, explained, “This award will significantly fund a number of projects that we expect will enhance the automation of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Required Reporting, speed the implementation of Electronic Payment Cards for claimants, and train staff in electronic advances and improved customer service.

Rhode Island will be the first New England State to offer Electronic Payment Cards. Eliminating the costs associated with printing and mailing paper checks is expected to result in significant savings. Filippone predicted, “Offering a Direct Deposit option should allow customers to receive their weekly UI benefits sooner and provide a more secure means of payment. This supports our commitment to provide exceptional customer service to these Rhode Islanders in their time of need.”

Over the next two years, the Department of Labor and Training plans to implement programmatic improvements, including enabling customers to call in their weekly certification for benefit eligibility by using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. This will eliminate the need for mailing certification forms to and from the claimant each week. Filippone emphasized, “This should greatly improve the timeliness of UI payments. Agents will have the ability to review and selectively process the dates the customer claimed on the IVR.”

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Twenty-five thousand dollars of the supplemental funding will enhance automated system reporting, improving the quality and accuracy of federally required reports. “This project will provide a more accurate accounting of claims and coincides with the award for the IVR certification process,” stated Filippone.

Another portion of awarded funds will allow twelve UI Adjudication staff to participate in the National Judicial College’s (NJC) Internet Training course. This past spring, RI was a pilot state for this innovative method of comprehensively training staff while eliminating the expense of out-of- state travel. NJC is in Reno, Nevada. “This advanced training will supplement existing staff training programs and help them understand the reasoning behind the series of questions in the fact-finding interview,” Filippone explained. “This online course is not only remarkably cost effective but it should promote a deeper understanding of the adjudication process.”

Fifty-thousand dollars will be used to implement commercial mail methods and improve postal management. The existing UI postal meter will be replaced with a digital meter. Assessments of current mailing processes will identify and eliminate redundancies. The Department’s UI web application and IVR system will also be modified to eliminate postal costs.

Finally, \$142,000 has been awarded for an Information Technology security assessment. State-of-the-art hardware and software will be purchased with award funds, including new servers to house and improve UI functions.

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The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training offers a wide array of employment and training services to both the general public and to individuals with unusual barriers to employment. DLT is ready to assist any job seeker, whether the goal is a first job, a better job, or a career change. Rhode Island’s work force is protected through the enforcement of labor laws, prevailing wage rates, and work place health and safety standards. Temporary income support is available to unemployed, sick, or injured workers and a comprehensive rehabilitation program is available to those injured on the job.

DLT is dedicated to the growth and competitiveness of Rhode Island industry, administering a variety of training grants, tax credits, and apprenticeship programs to help employers. Economic indicators and labor market information are available for long-range planning. The Agency engages in active outreach, helping large and small employers retain their best workers or retrain their existing work force. At no cost to the employer, DLT will also screen job applicants, post job vacancies, and help businesses institute cost-sharing programs that can avert layoffs.

For more information on the innovative programs and services available to all Rhode Islanders at the Department of Labor and Training, please call (401) 462-8000 or visit the web site at www.dlt.ri.gov.

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Auxiliary aids and services are available up on request to individuals with disabilities / TDD (401) 462-8006

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