

Answers to Questions Received Regarding the Workforce Innovation Fund Grant Evaluation RFP

Q1. According to the On-Ramps abstract, in year 2 of the effort, two of Rhode Island's four one-stop career centers will pilot the on-ramps system to career pathways through re-organized one-stop structures. We have two questions regarding this:

- **Have the two one-stop sites been selected yet?**
- **What are the criteria that were used (or will be used) to select these two pilot sites?**

A1. Rhode Island has two local Workforce Investment Boards and we will be selecting one one-stop from each WIB. This means that the Providence/Cranston One-Stop will be one of the sites; the other one-stop pilot site nor the criteria for selecting that site has been determined. We will be looking to the evaluator to help us determine appropriate criteria and guide the site selection process.

Q2. Has the IT occupation been selected? If so, what is the occupation and why was it selected?

A2. The state is currently engaged in a career pathways design process and has drafted career pathway maps in both information technology and healthcare. No occupations have been selected in either sector. These maps, along two additional career pathway maps to be added by December 2013, will be used as the foundation for discussions about funding alignment.

Q3. Is the career ladder in health care targeted at a particular sub-sector?

A3. See response to Q2.

Q4. What is the format of EmployRI data? Are those data easily exported to Excel or SPSS, or is a specific software system required to analyze the data?

A4. EmployRI provides a daily extract file that can be imported into Excel according to the WIASRD data elements. As of the time of this response, we do not know if the data can be easily exported to SPSS. We are currently researching that question and we will post the answer when we have an official response.

Q5. I understand that the systems-change aspect of the On-Ramps initiative draws upon the experience and knowledge that was gained through an access to benefits initiative that was conducted by RI-DHS with funding by the Ford Foundation. When will the evaluation findings of the access to benefits initiative be available for review?

A5. The implementation funding for the "Equip, Succeed: DHS Vision 2020" was awarded 6 months ago. Given that the planning phase has just completed and the implementation phase is just beginning, the findings from this work are not something that we can count on incorporating into our knowledge base.

Q6. I understand that two of the four one-stop centers in the state will serve as pilot sites for the new system. Have the two sites been selected? What criteria have been or will be used to select the two sites?

A6. See response to Q1.

Q7. Was an external evaluation consultant used to prepare the evaluation component of the proposal that was submitted to ETA for the WIF grant? If yes, is that consultant eligible to submit a proposal in response to your current solicitation for this work?

A7. The Rhode Island Department of Labor did not hire an external evaluation consultant to prepare the evaluation component of the proposal that was submitted to ETA for the WIF grant. The person who wrote the evaluation component of the proposal will not be submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation.

Q8. We are planning to select the comparison group from clients from the three NetworkRI offices not associated with the on-ramps program. Can you give me a rough estimate of the number of labor exchange clients or customers at each of the five NetworkRI offices?

A8.

NetworkRI office	Number of labor exchange (Wagner-Peyser participants) participants from July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012
Providence	15,467
Pawtucket	4,962
Woonsocket	4,085
Wakefield	2,568
West Warwick	5,153

Q9. We also want to use the UI wage record data to indicate in-state earnings and employment. In Washington, the wage record had about a 6-9 month lag. Is the time lag in RI similar? Would it be possible to get the record layout for the RI wage record file?

A9. As of the time of this response, we do not know the wage record lag or the layout for the record file. We are currently researching that question and we will post the answer when we have an official response.

Q10. For the formative evaluation, you request semi-annual reports on data to the leadership team. Do you expect more frequent on-site engagement and feedback to the leadership team? And are you open to more frequent contact and exchanges?

A10. Yes. We expect the chosen evaluator to work closely with the Project Implementation/ Leadership Team (Agency Senior Managers) throughout the project to solicit input and buy-in about the evaluation design and keep the leadership team apprised of progress and interim findings. This would include attending relevant meetings, facilitating discussions with the Leadership Team about key design decisions and periodic presentations on progress, findings and course corrections. We also expect regular contact and exchange between the evaluation team and the On-Ramps Project Director and their staff through phone calls and on-site meetings and site visits to discuss shared expectations and plans for implementation and data collection, and to troubleshoot issues.

We are interested in hearing from respondents what they believe to be the right level of engagement in the formative evaluation. Rhode Island's goal is to learn from the process we are about to undertake, and we

welcome suggestions based on experience with similar evaluations of the level and frequency of engagement and feedback.

Q11. The Logic Model provides an excellent framework for the evaluation. Are you open to reviewing and potentially refining the Logic Model as the outset to insure that all possible outputs and outcomes are clearly articulated?

A11. Yes.

Q12. You indicate that 1,000 participants will participate in the On-Ramp effort? Can you say more about the components of this effort and how it will be managed to ensure fidelity of services across the various partners? Also, can you say more about when participants will start to be served and the projected flow of participants over time?

A12. The On-Ramps pilot will be managed by two project managers (one from each of the local Workforce Investment Boards) who will directly report to the On-Ramps Project Director who is accountable to the Project Implementation/Leadership Team. The Project Director and the two Managers will be responsible for both leading the on-ramps re-design of the One Stops, and ensuring the fidelity of implementation of the re-design across the various sites. The Department of Education (RIDE) and Department of Human Services (DHS), who have lead roles in designing and implementing work readiness standards (RIDE) and aligning supportive services within the on-ramps (DHS) will each have dedicated project managers with a dual reporting relationship to both the On-Ramps Project Director and their agency senior manager.

As currently designed, customers who come to one of the points of access for the pilot (either the physical one-stops that are running the pilot or one of their satellite sites) will self-select to be in the comparison group or the experimental group. Upon entrance to a one-stop center or with a one-stop staff at a remote location, all customers will use DLT's EmployRI system to complete a standard eligibility questionnaire. We will capitalize on the existing eligibility questionnaire currently used by DLT and will adapt EmployRI as needed to capture a standard set of eligibility information that is agreed upon by the Project Implementation Team. This will be used to: 1) determine the eligibility of the customer (based on shared eligibility criteria determined by the Project Implementation Team) and 2) gather baseline data on the entire population of customers. Once a customer is determined to be eligible, they will be offered three choices: 1) participate in regular services; 2) participate in a general on-ramp program (work readiness/experiential work, job coaching); 3) participate in on-ramp program that leads to career pathways. Those that don't choose the on-ramps and career pathways will become the comparison group. We expect that 1500 people will be assessed as eligible with approximately 500 people choosing to participate in regular one-stop services and become the control group. Of the remaining people, we estimate that 500 people will receive general on-ramp services and 500 people will receive on-ramp plus career pathways services. An estimated 1000 people will receive some combination of work readiness workshops, coaching (in-person and virtual), and supportive services linkages. Our current work plan estimates that we will launch the on-ramps pilot and begin intake in July or August 2013. Eligible customers who chose to participate in an on-ramp program that leads to a career pathway will receive some combination of services based on their personal need including work readiness workshops, coaching (in-person and virtual), and supportive services linkages over the next two months and be placed on a pathway by the end of October 2012. The on-ramp design and plan for service delivery including the timing and flow participants through the system will be developed between November 2012 and June 2013.

Q13. Can you provide further information on the 3-4 career pathway programs? Are the pathways administered by the CCRI? Are they currently operational and serving students? How many credits and courses are the individual programs and how often will they be offered over the next three years? What is the expected time a typical student will serve in a career pathway and is there a identifiable education outcome such as a credential or, in other words, what would be considered a successful outcome for participating in career pathway program?

A13. Rhode Island does not currently have an operational career pathways system in place. However, the state is currently engaged in a career pathways design process and expects to launch the first two career pathways maps in March 2013 with two additional maps added by December 2013. We expect that the amount of time that a typical student will serve in a career pathway will vary depending on the pathway and that all pathways would result in one or more industry-recognized credential depending on the pathway.

Please note, however, that the On-Ramps initiative seeks to do two things:

- 1) Create systems change by braiding funding, using uniform performance measures and pursuing policy change in a way that will support transparent and accessible career pathways.
- 2) Pilot the systems change by re-designing a portion of the one-stop system to systematize on-ramps to those pathways.

While we are seeking to create more transparent and accessible career pathways system, we do not intend to directly test long-term participant level outcomes of the career pathways themselves because of the relatively short duration of the grant. Instead, we would like to look at system level outcomes to see if the systems re-alignment along career pathways at the state level resulted in improved targeting of resources, increased funding invested in career pathways and reduced training duplication. We also plan to measure the outcomes at a participant level resulting from the creation of on-ramps to the career pathways with services that include work readiness and work experience, career coaching and supportive services. This will allow us to see whether on-ramps to career pathways create better outcomes than general on-ramps and whether using on-ramp services overall is more effective than no on-ramps. Some of the outcomes we are proposing to measure include: increase in number of low-skilled, low-literacy clients received services, faster throughput of customers, increased cost-effectiveness of services, higher wages and retention, and greater customer/employer satisfaction.

Q14. You also indicate that 500 participants receiving on-ramp services will continue into the career pathway programs. Can you provide some insights into the timing and flow of participants from on-ramps into career pathways?

Our current work plan estimates that we will launch the on-ramps pilot and begin intake in August 2013. Eligible customers who chose to participate in an on-ramp program that leads to a career pathway will receive some combination of services based on their personal need including work readiness workshops, coaching (in-person and virtual), and supportive services linkages over the next two months and be placed on a pathway by the end of October 2012. The on-ramp design and plan for service delivery including the timing and flow participants through the system will be developed between November 2012 and June 2013.

Q15. The evaluation covers a three year period. Several of the expected impacts such as higher wages and retention may not be possible for some participants during this time. What is your expectation in this regard?

A15. We understand that wage and retention data may not be available for all participants during the timeframe of the evaluation depending on when they are placed in a job. However, we anticipate that it will be possible to compare post-on-ramp average placement wages to pre-on-ramp employment wages for individuals who were employed prior to enrollment in the On-Ramps pilot. For participants placed in jobs within the first 12 months of the program (starting October 2013) it should be possible to collect retention information for up to 12 months post-employment.

Q16. You identify an individual outcome of increased private sector training for workers. Can you identify the actions that will be taken in the initiative that are related to that outcome? Also, do you have a data base that can be used to assess private sector training expenditures in Rhode Island? If not, do you have expectations as to how this information will be obtained?

A16. We have not designed the actions yet to measure this outcome and are interested in approaches to this data point. Possible strategies include a survey of employers with whom on-ramps participants are placed to determine the level of training they receive as compared to other training; co-invested funds in career pathways programs; or a baseline survey of employers participating in career pathways and follow-up surveys. We do not have a data base to assess private sector training expenditures.