

TRANSFORMATION GRANT TO TRANSFORM NATIONAL WORKFORCE MODEL, RI and BEYOND

Developmental Disabilities Employment Transformation Grant Positioned to Transform Model for RI & Beyond; Focuses on State's Economic and Workforce Development

WARWICK, RI, UNITED STATES, June 28, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition](#), in conjunction with the [Rhode Island Developmental Disability Coalition \(RIDDC\)](#) and Skills for RI's Future, have

launched [RI Workforce Investment and New Solutions \(RI WINS\)](#), a grant program focused on creating a new way of doing business that focuses on the needs of business. The new project is distinctly different from past programs launched with funding from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), in that it is designed to become a replicable model for

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other states and focuses on educating and training businesses to work with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and developing lasting, functional relationships between the human services, businesses, and governmental sectors.

According to WINS' project manager, Sue Babin, “the businesses understand who we are, what we are, what we're trying to do, and become open to having a diverse, inclusive workforce. It doesn't happen overnight; it is part of the process of reaching out to more employees and

building upon what Skills for RI Future has already put into place. Five years from now, the grant will have helped them to be able to connect with more agencies and to have people from the community agencies more formally trained in looking at this not from a human service standpoint, but from the point of economic development workforce development.”



Workforce Investment & New Solutions

RI WINS - Workforce Investment and New Solutions

Based on the grant proposal, there is framework for implementing and sustaining new and innovative strategies for providing community supports to individuals with developmental disabilities that will increase favorable personal outcomes for both employment and integrated community experiences. The project is multi-faceted, creating positive change for employers as well as agency providers and individuals within the developmental disabilities community.

This initiative will have a direct and measurable impact on the State's economic and workforce development as it helps to add more Rhode Islanders into the workforce and increases their ability to contribute to local and statewide economies.

Following a consent decree concerning desegregation and improvement upon discriminatory practices issued nearly 10 years ago, the State of Rhode Island has made strides in improving the services and opportunities available for people with (I/DD) within the state.

Since then, hundreds of millions of dollars have been injected into I/DD funding, with another \$75 million set to be awarded this year. As part of the influx in funding, the RI WINS program was developed and has seen partners receive training designed to build lasting relationships with prospective employers, beginning with a comprehensive study and clear understanding of the company - beyond its products and services -into marketing and sales, and into management, culture, and mission. Only then does the discussion of a prospective employee from the providing agency occur, and it is not a single contact. Instead, it is an ongoing conversation to genuinely assist the business. And, that conversation is not limited to only one candidate from one agency, and a one-time only potential placement.

The sharing of information about a company's needs leading to collaboration among agencies is an ongoing facet of the project. Using technology, an online "channel" to share best practices, is another innovation.

Unique to this project, according to Danna Spencer, Associate Director of Client Services for Inclusion at Skills for RI's Future is that "We are mentoring a demand driven approach to workforce development with our Human Services provider agency employment staff that goes well beyond one job opportunity for one candidate. Employers are getting the same message from anybody who would engage with them on developing a workforce, in a language they already understand – that of workforce development, economic growth, business solutions that improve their bottom line, etc."

Ms. Babin added, "what also makes our project different is we're bringing in people that have longtime experience in the state, with small business administration and business development expertise, those with connections to Chambers of Commerce, the New England Veterans Business Outreach Center, and dozens of employer partners. By working with people that are outside of the human service world, we're also maximizing our connections and the expertise we can offer our community."

In building these long-term relationships, RI WINS also creates opportunities for prospective employers and industry partners to benefit from various resources and grants, in addition to an ongoing source of referrals of job candidates. An effective, diversified workforce strengthens individual businesses and a state's economy.

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