

RI DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL RECEIVES 2023 DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION AWARD

Awarded in Non-profit/Social Services category for wide scope of projects; collaborated with partners on outreach to businesses, I/DD community & agencies



RIDDC Logo

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-- The [Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council](#) (RIDDC) announced today that they received Providence Business News's Annual Summit and Awards program on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Specifically, RIDDC was the winner in the Non-profit/Social Services category,

where they were recognized among 12 other businesses and organizations for their efforts in diversity and inclusion. The presentation will be made at a breakfast ceremony and summit on December 7 at 9 a.m. at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick.

“

Leadership and Policy changes are our top priorities. This award attests the value of the projects, educational and collaborative efforts designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities.”

*Kevin Nerney, Executive
Director - RIDDC*

The scope of projects is wide-ranging and multi-faceted, with RIDDC working collaboratively with the RI Cross Disability Coalition (RICDC) in expanding outreach to RI businesses, as well as to the I/DD members, families, and community agencies supporting adults with disabilities. Among them:

- The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council

created The [Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition](#) under its advocacy mission in 2009.

Individuals with all disabilities can connect and talk about what is important in their lives and learn leadership skills to advocate for what they can do together to improve quality for all people. Also, the Coalition creates an opportunity for members to become familiar with various services available from agencies in Rhode Island, and to learn what support the agencies can provide.

- The RICDC spearheaded the project: [A New Way of Thinking... RI WINS](#) (Workforce Investment & New Solutions) about the personal futures of people with disabilities so that individuals and their families make more informed choices, have more opportunities for living meaningful and inclusive lives, and receive the necessary support for preparing them for employment in Rhode Island's workforce, either in wage jobs or potential business-within-a-business connections. One of the components of this project is a Speakers' Bureau of 20+ individuals with disabilities who have been giving presentations all across the state in the areas of employment, self-employment, meaningful lives, and human rights to High Schools, Transition Centers and community agencies supporting individuals with disabilities.



- The Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition established a new collaborative project with the RI Developmental Disabilities Council and Skills for RI's Future and designed a model to transform and enhance the workforce model in RI to educate employers about the abilities of people with disabilities and their potential for contributions to improving RI's economic development which spotlights the abilities of the disability community. That initiative continues, with participating community agencies continuing to receive monthly consultative support and strategies identified for follow-up with RI businesses for potential job opportunities for adults with disabilities.

The RI Cross Disability Coalition secured funding for its project from the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to work with RIDDC and Skills for RI as the lead agencies heading up a collaborative effort by 14 organizations and agencies to professionally train their staff with new approaches. These approaches include learning to connect and engage with Rhode Island employers through informational interviews to determine their workforce needs and potential solutions, including future job opportunities for people with disabilities.

The project also included working collaboratively with the Business Services Division of the Rhode Island Secretary of State's Office and a diverse committee of individuals with extensive experience in this area to develop a new 3-part "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility" educational series. The series, which is offered by the RI Secretary of State's Office provides RI

employers with:

- Information about the benefits of creating a more inclusive workforce,
- Ideas for action steps to initiate to build diversity,
- Details about the incentives and resources available to RI businesses, and
- Opportunities to hear the perspectives of RI employers who creatively manage a diverse workforce.

"We're just thrilled," notes Sue Babin, RIDDC special projects director. "This award reflects the efforts of many people within RIDDC/RICDC and community partners who have collaborated on various aspects of "A New Way of Thinking and RI WINS" to help build more inclusive and meaningful lives for people with disabilities. We're excited by the synergy we've been able to build with people with disabilities and their families, RI employers, community agencies supporting individuals with disabilities, and the momentum that goes along with it. We're so happy to share this recognition with all who are involved, and are excited for what's to come, as there's so much more to do."

Among its well-established projects, the RIDDC has taken a multi-faceted approach to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, having developed a successful nationally recognized self-employment business program for people with disabilities and other aspiring entrepreneurs, complete with a series of eight classes, one-on-one mentoring, direct sales opportunities for small business owners, ongoing networking support, as well as a mini-grant program for its participants. The program is funded by the State Department of Labor and Training (DLT). At the outset, entrepreneurs are connecting to their local and business communities while developing their small businesses and demonstrating that people with disabilities are also contributing to the growth of RI's economy.

RIDDC Executive Director, Kevin Nerney, citing the organization's goals and mission, notes "Leadership and Policy changes are among our top priorities. This award attests to the value of the projects, programs, educational and collaborative efforts designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities. And it shows the unmistakable value of the people who work with us to demonstrate daily their passion for making a difference in those lives. We're truly honored to receive this award from Providence Business News, an organization that intentionally recognizes these efforts and collaborated with us to help make it happen."

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