Collaborating to Improve Statewide Career Preparation Systems in Rhode Island

Collaborating to Improve Statewide Career Preparation Systems in Rhode Island

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To Mom

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Abstract

In January 2017, it was announced that Rhode Island was one of 10 states to win a $2 million grant for increasing career readiness. The state would use this grant to fund *PrepareRI: A Unified Action Plan for Career Readiness*, which called for the examination of Rhode Island's current K-12 career education practices and pathways and their alignment with industry need. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) was responsible for various parts of that plan, including assembling a group called "PrepareRI Ambassadors," a cohort of educators tasked with developing the resources and toolkits necessary for improving career education statewide. This capstone documents the process by which the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort was assembled and reveals that this process is best achieved through collaboration. It also reveals that this same collaborative process can be used to initiate new relationships in the public sector while strengthening those relationships that already exist.

Introduction

"Broadly speaking, state education agencies … are responsible for administering state and federal education laws, dispersing [*sic*] state and federal resources, and providing guidance to public districts and schools across the state" (Brown, Hess, Lautzenheiser, & Owen, 2011, p.11). It might seem that in a state education system serving just over 142,000 K-12 students in 36 districts – a state system that is dwarfed by the city districts of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago – fulfilling these responsibilities would be relatively straightforward. However, during my 10-month residency from July 5, 2016, to May 5, 2017, with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), I came to find that RIDE's efforts were less influenced by the number of students or districts and more by the quality of its relationships with communities, the education field, employers, and other state agencies. As I became more familiar with the state and the context within which the department existed, I came to find that RIDE did not exist in isolation, free to focus on, "broadly speaking," all things education, but that it was part of a statewide ecosystem that included economic and political realities. These realities, in turn, served to help or hinder RIDE's efforts and impact.

While I assisted on a number of tasks during my tenure, my strategic project was part of a larger initiative, PrepareRI, which sought "to improve the career readiness and postsecondary attainment of all Rhode Island youth to prepare them with the skills they need for jobs that pay" (Rhode Island Department of Education [RIDE], 2016b, p. 2). This readiness and attainment would be achieved through high-quality career pathways. My work was a focused effort, but served two purposes. The primary and explicit purpose was to assemble a cohort of education leaders – PrepareRI Ambassadors – who

would first examine the state's career preparation systems and then make research-based recommendations for the improvement of those systems. The secondary, less-conspicuous purpose came from Stephen Osborn, the department's Chief for Innovation and my residency supervisor. Osborn noted that "there are few growth opportunities for educators" in Rhode Island and that he would like to see "a playbook for developing educator leadership." This playbook would include "creating new groups of educators and looking to existing groups" in a RIDE-led effort "to unlock that genius," with "genius" connoting the solutions and innovations that result from collaboration. Acknowledging the pressures and realities that existed in the state, Osborn wondered, "How do you lead change in this environment?" This led to a call for what I considered a challenging, yet worthy, deliverable: creating a process to improve relationships between RIDE and the field.

The following document chronicles my efforts to realize the explicit and implicit purposes of assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort. I first share the organization of the department and the division to which I was assigned, as well as the work of the office of which I was a member. I then consider the context within which RIDE was situated. As noted, the department was part of a vibrant and complex ecosystem, and RIDE's position within that ecosystem influenced what it could – and could not – accomplish. Next, I describe the overall challenge facing the state, RIDE's role in addressing that challenge, and how my strategic project set out to develop a resolution through an intentional course of action. This course of action, informed by researching the factors that bound the challenge, was multifaceted and had outcomes of varying degrees of success. In the analysis of the evidence collected, I consider these outcomes

and reflect upon how I might have approached the work differently for either greater success or improved cohesion. Finally, I proffer how the lessons learned from my work could be used both by RIDE to continue collaborating toward improved career readiness in Rhode Island and by the education sector when engaging in endeavors that call for or would benefit from collaboration.

Context

When I began my residency at RIDE in July 2016, the structure of the department seemed to have stabilized after a period of flux. Ken Wagner had been appointed Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education exactly one year prior, assuming the position Deborah Gist had held since July 1, 2009. In May 2016, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, composed of the Rhode Island Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education, approved RIDE's new Table of Organization, or organizational chart (see *Figure 1*). According to council minutes:

> The organizational structure is designed to reflect the priorities of our current strategic plan and to account for the current constraints on resources. This structure provides the most optimal utility to implement the initiatives that the agency will lead over the next four years. Of important note, this structure envisions the flexibility for office teams to collaborate across offices and across the agency. (Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education [RICESE], 2016, p.1)

Stephen Osborn, my supervisor, transitioned from being Chief of Accelerating School Performance to Chief for Innovation, a division comprised of the Office of Data, Analysis & Research (ODAR) and Office of Network & Information Systems (ONIS). I

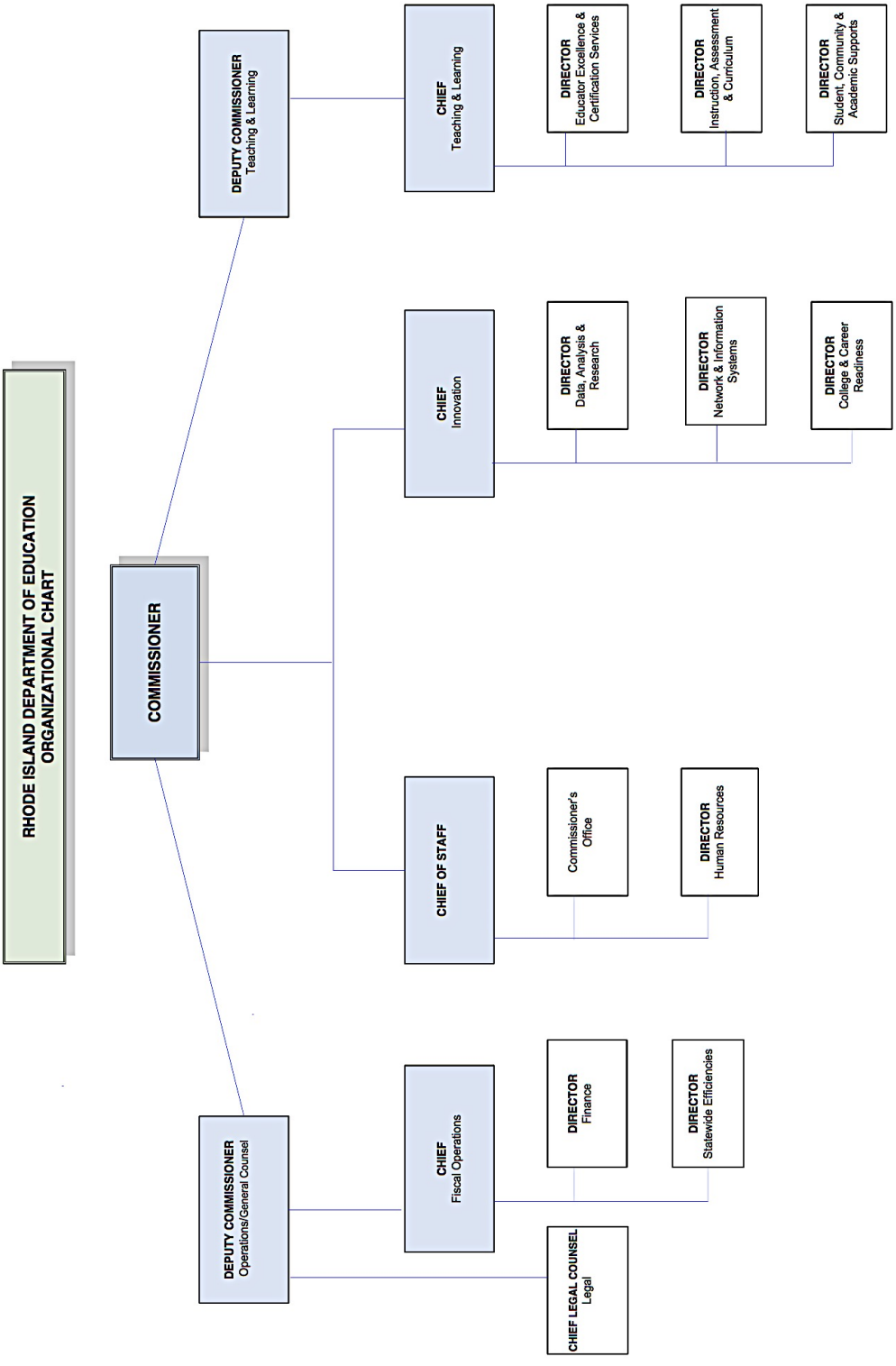

Figure 1. Rhode Island Department of Education Organizational Chart (RICESE, 2016, p.2)

was a member of a third office Osborn oversaw: the Office of College & Career Readiness (OCCR). OCCR was a new office, combining the Office of Transformation/Charter Schools, which included intervention supports, transformation models, and charter development, and the Office of Multiple Pathways, which included secondary reform (including CTE and middle school), adult basic education (including GED), and virtual learning and innovation. During my time with the department, I witnessed the advent of collaboration across OCCR, an effort led by Office Director Brian Darrow and resulting in the crossing of work streams that, initially, had appeared to exist only in parallel.

There were three work streams that I either participated in directly or became familiar with deeply. The first was school choice. As with elsewhere, school choice in Rhode Island is closely associated with charter schools and charter networks. However, there was also course choice, as provided by the Advanced Coursework Network and Dual Enrollment, and program choice in career and technical education (CTE). Another work stream I became involved with dealt with empowerment. Commissioner Wagner, Chief Osborn, Director Darrow, and others referred to empowerment as "letting those closest to the work do the work" – another way of saying that school personnel, because of their proximity, were best suited to meet the needs of students and their families. The last work stream of my strategic project first focused on writing a grant proposal for JPMorgan Chase's New Skills for Youth initiative and then actualizing the proposal after the grant had been awarded. This stream of the work not only shaped my strategic project but also introduced me to various stakeholders from across the state. All of the work streams provided insight into the relationships that existed and the educational, economic,

and political realities that helped define the context within which RIDE was situated.

School Choice

Educational options beyond traditional public schooling in Rhode Island include, but are not limited to, enrollment in charter schools and networks, course enrollment through both the Advanced Coursework Network (ACN) and Dual Enrollment, and career and technical (CTE) program enrollment. I was only familiar with course enrollment as a consequence of exposure and research, but spent almost half of my residency on charter work and the other half on the strategic project (the latter requiring a deep knowledge of CTE as practiced in the state). Each was part of a concerted effort to ensure "students have access to personalized learning experiences that are experiential, blended, flexible, and differentiated" (RICESE, 2015, p. 18).

Charter Schools. In mid-July 2016, the Rhode Island legislature passed Senate Bill 3075, known as the "Gallo Bill" after State Senator Hanna M. Gallo, changing the law that governed the establishment of new charters and the amendment of existing ones. The passing of SB 3075 ended a nearly yearlong moratorium on new and amended charters. It also initiated a focused effort by RIDE to update policy, issue requests for applications, evaluate those applications, conduct public hearings, and recommend approvals and denials to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, the sole charter authorizer in the state. The entire process, which had formerly taken about a year, took five months to complete, ending with the Council announcing its decisions at the end of December 2016.

Course Choice. Many of Rhode Island's charter schools were near or at capacity; this meant that students hoping to enroll in their school of choice, as opposed to their

neighborhood school, had to participate in a lottery. Another choice option for secondary students was to enroll in one or both of the state's programs that offered course choice. The Advanced Coursework Network (ACN) was new for the 2016-17 school year and consisted of a network of charter and traditional schools providing "half or whole year classes and will include advanced science and mathematics courses, as well as Advanced Placement (AP©), world languages, career-focused and dual/concurrent enrollment courses" (RIDE, 2016a, para. 6). Middle school and high school students attending a school in the network could enroll in, without cost to the family, a course offered by any other school the network. Some courses were online while others required the student to physically attend the other school, although transportation was not provided. Thirty-six schools participated in the ACN school year (SY) 2016-17, with 14 more slated to join in SY 2017-18. Over 800 students participated in the program the first year; the program remained at this number the second year due to budget constraints.

The Dual Enrollment program offered course choice to high school students interested in enrolling in classes at one of the state's three public postsecondary institutions: the Community College of Rhode Island; Rhode Island College; and the University of Rhode Island. *Dual enrollment* courses were offered on the high school campus and were taught by qualified faculty, while *concurrent enrollment* courses required the student to be enrolled in both the high school and the respective postsecondary institution. RIDE managed the program, but the Office of Postsecondary Education paid for materials and tuition. Student transportation was not covered, although schools or districts could opt to cover that cost as well, providing students with a completely free opportunity to earn college credit. In SY 2015-16, 3,807 students took

5,885 courses offered through the Dual Enrollment program.

Empowerment

In his March 29, 2016, State of Education address to the Rhode Island General Assembly, Commissioner Wagner framed empowerment as "a set of opportunities for autonomy and flexibility that can help take our neighborhood schools to the next level," (RIDE, 2016d, p. 5). These opportunities were signed into law as the School and Family Empowerment Act (Empowerment Act) in June 2016. The Empowerment Act established that "a school in a public school district, a school within a school in a public school district, a career and technical education program within a public school district, [and] a state school" could apply to be designated an empowerment school (RIDE, 2016c, p.1). According to the *Guidance Document on Empowerment Schools and the Empowerment School Application Process for the 2017-18 School Year*:

> The Empowerment Act provides educators and community leaders the voluntary opportunity to reimagine and implement their vision for an excellent school by taking advantage of unprecedented levels of school-based autonomy and regulatory flexibility. These autonomies and flexibilities will enable educators to continuously improve instruction and implement and adopt innovative strategies that meet the needs of their students. (RIDE, 2017, p.3)[1]

New Skills for Youth

In March 2016, Rhode Island was named one of 24 states to receive a $100,000 award as part of JPMorgan Chase's New Skills for Youth (NSFY) Phase 1 grant opportunity. Rhode Island Governor Gina M. Raimondo noted:

[1] Applications to become an empowerment school in SY 2017-18 were being solicited at the time of this writing.

> We are pleased and grateful to receive the New Skills for Youth planning grant, which will help us focus and advance our efforts toward aligning our career-and-technical system with the most rapidly growing fields in the Rhode Island economy. This work will benefit Rhode Island students, families, and the business and industry community. (Providence Business News Staff, 2016, para. 2)

The award was applied to the development of a plan for aligning K-12 and postsecondary career education with industry need and demand for high-quality pathways to high-skill, high-wage jobs. The entire effort was dubbed Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI), "a commitment by the State of Rhode Island to improve the career readiness and postsecondary attainment of all Rhode Island youth to prepare them with the skills they need for jobs that pay" (RIDE, 2016b, p.20). The Career Readiness Working Group (CRWG), comprised of nearly 80 employers, educators, and civic leaders met from June to September 2016 to review the state's career preparation systems and identify equity and access gaps. The Rhode Island Core Team (Core Team), 16 individuals representing the Office of the Governor, the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB), Commerce, the Department of Labor and Training (DLT), the Community College of Rhode Island, the Postsecondary Commissioner's Office, and RIDE, met weekly over the same time period to curate and compile the information and data generated by the CRWG. Based on that information and data, the NSFY Core Team wrote the intended career readiness plan, *PrepareRI: A Unified Action Plan for Career Readiness* [2] (*Action Plan*). The plan, as well as a needs assessment and the CRWG evidence, was submitted to JPMorgan Chase on October 7, 2016, in a bid to win a New Skills for Youth (NSFY) Phase 2 grant of up to

[2] http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Educational-Programming/NSFY/NSFY_Application_Final.pdf

$2 million paid over three years. Representatives from the 24 states that won Phase 1 grants presented their proposals to JPMorgan Chase in late October 2016. In mid-January 2017, JPMorgan Chase announced that Rhode Island was one of 10 states awarded a $2 million grant. The grant would fund the actualization of the PrepareRI *Action Plan* over the next three years.

Relationships and Educational, Economic, and Political Realities

The school choice, Empowerment, and New Skills for Youth work streams gave me a better understanding of the context within which both RIDE and the work that I would lead was situated. I developed a better sense of the relationships among various stakeholders, of the educational, economic, and political realities that existed, and of how those realities influenced relationships, and vice versa. For example, the aforementioned Gallo Bill required analyses of the educational, programmatic, and fiscal impacts of a new or amended charter on a sending community. This was a political reality that expanded the focus of charter school work beyond the academic. The Gallo Bill also required written consent "by the town or city council for each proposed sending district where the council considers the fiscal and educational welfare of the municipality and students after at least one public hearing" ("An Act Relating to Education," 2016). Many in the department viewed these requirements as attempts to slow the spread of charter schools and networks. A charter amendment proposed by Providence-based Achievement First that sought to extend services from 722 students to 3,112 students over a 10-year period, dominated most discussions. Linda Borg (2016b) reported in the *Providence Journal* that, according to a 46-page report submitted by City Councilman Sam Zurier, Achievement First's "expansion to more than 3,000 students would produce a net loss to

the district of between $173 million and $179 million, depending on how many teaching positions are eliminated" (para. 2). The issue of money was particularly sensitive in the large, urban municipality that claimed the state's second-lowest median income. Borg (2016a) also reported that Providence mayor Jorge Elorza "said he will defer supporting the expansion until Achievement First demonstrates that it will offset any financial impact to the Providence public schools" (para. 4). Complicating Mayor Elorza's position was the fact he chaired the school's board since Achievement First is a Mayoral Academy. Alluding to the fact that 15,000 of the state's 19,000 struggling students are in Providence schools, Commissioner Wagner (2016) wondered in an op-ed in the same newspaper, "If one is opposed to the Achievement First proposal, what is the alternate plan for the children of Providence? And how is this plan different – truly different – from what we have already tried over the past 25 years?" (para. 17). The query, perceived by some as a either slight against or an abandonment of the Providence education system, drew rebuke from the public; Wagner apologized at the same December public hearing that saw the Council conditionally approve Achievement First's charter amendment.

This example highlights the intersection of the realities I mentioned: educational (an option for struggling students/a comment on the existing system); economic (a large, urban, poverty-stricken district/the shifting of funds to a competing, if not threatening, service provider); and political (the stemming of charter growth through legislation/the inciting of public ire by highlighting the cost of expansion/the mayor's holding of two positions which might be in tension with each other). These realities, in turn, affected and/or were affected by relationships, including those between RIDE and the General Assembly, the commissioner and local officials, the public and RIDE vis-à-vis the

commissioner, and the commissioner and the media (especially the local newspaper). The Empowerment Act also faced similar realities and the effects on/of relationships. As originally written, the Empowerment Act called for "a program of inter- and intra-district public school choice … in order to enable a student to attend an empowerment school in a nonresident school or district" (Mullaney, 2016, p. 25). A draft version also had provisions for what a sending school would owe commensurate to its per-pupil expenditure (PPE) and for amending the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). None of this made it into the final version of the Empowerment Act. A concern was that if students were to leave one empowerment school for another, it would mean a loss of revenue for the sending school and potentially, should the exodus be substantial, the shuttering of classes or schools and a consequent unemployment of teachers. While amending the CBA would still have to be approved by teachers' unions, to even suggest such a thing impinged upon existing power structures, a potential political misstep. Although the final version of the Empowerment Act excluded these measures, it failed to gain widespread support, in part because it pushed control down to the school and away from school boards and superintendents. A year later, Borg (2017) wrote that the "R.I. 'empowerment schools' plan fizzled," accurately noting, "Only two or three schools have expressed interest in the optional program" (para. 4). *The Providence Journal* (2017) ran an editorial the following week, claiming, "Weak, timid plan a dismal failure" (title). At the time of this writing, the Empowerment Act seemed to be in stasis.

The NSFY work saw state agencies, employers, and educators collaborate in envisioning how industry and education could be coupled for the improved economic health of the state. The work was also another expression of political support from

Governor Raimondo for education. The Advanced Coursework Network and Dual Enrollment were both, in part, attributed to the governor, who also launched an initiative in early 2017 to provide two years of free tuition at the state's public colleges and university. Like the NSFY work, she too paired education and employment. In June 2014, while running for governor, she asserted in her *A Vision for K-12 Education*:

> But no plan to create jobs is complete without a plan for improving our education system. Without a quality, educated workforce, our state will never become a destination for middle-class jobs, nor will we be able to provide our students with the tools they'll need to earn a postsecondary degree or compete in a global economy. (2014, p.1)

Governor Raimondo echoed these sentiments – specifically, that job creation and improved education should happen in tandem – two years later in her February 2016 budget address: "All of our kids deserve better, and I know – acting together – that we can improve our schools so children can get the skills they need to succeed in today's economy" (Rhode Island, Office of the Governor, 2016, p. 6). When it came to the New Skills for Youth proposal, she was the only governor of the 24 states competing for the Phase 2 grant to present to JPMorgan Chase, a conspicuous and intentional endorsement of the work and the initiative. The fact that the Core Team responsible for writing the NSFY proposal met at the statehouse, instead of RIDE or elsewhere, also signaled the political center of the work.

The cited scenarios certainly do not provide an exhaustive review of all the relational, educational, economic, and political dynamics at play within RIDE or, certainly, in the state. They highlight my recognition that there *were* dynamics at play

instead of assuming that the work I would be leading would progress unfettered. Recognizing this guided my approach to that work and, ultimately, the extent to which that work was realized.

The Task, Explicit and Implied

The *Action Plan* is a 42-page document that includes six overarching objectives for the improvement of Rhode Island's career preparation systems. These objectives are further broken down into 19 goals and 60 action steps to realize those goals. RIDE was named one of 10 agencies and organizations that would own and operationalize the various action steps found in the plan. For my strategic project, I was charged with leading a single action step, work that would result in the creation of a cohort of 20 educator leaders *from* the field to develop career education resources and toolkits *for* the field.

Overarching Objective 2, Goal 4, of the *Action Plan* called for "provid(ing) all educators (traditional and CTE) with supports, professional development and leadership opportunities that enable them to gain expertise in high-wage, high-demand fields and strengthen their instructional practices in career pathways" (RIDE, 2016b, p. 27; see "Appendix A: Overarching Objective 2, Goal 4 of the Three-Year Action Plan"). Action Step 2 of the goal required the state to:

> Establish an educator fellowship program – PrepareRI Ambassadors – who will be teacher-leaders passionate about expanding career education in their schools and districts, who will lead professional development … and will develop and inform policy recommendations to support the expansion of career education efforts. PrepareRI Ambassadors will be chosen through a rigorous application

process and receive a stipend for part-time work. (RIDE, 2016b, p. 27)

The *Action Plan* further mandated that the PrepareRI Ambassadors would promote the expansion of career education across the state by: championing career education in their own schools and districts; leading professional development for improved career pathways in high-skill, high-demand fields; and influencing policy, either through research or resources.

There was an implied task as well. Osborn's request to improve relationships between RIDE and the field had me deeply consider how to approach that work in a way that simultaneously improved relationships and assembled the desired cohort. For this work to constitute "a process," it also had to be replicable. In light of all of this, I wondered the following:

- What were the existing relationships with the field like and why was it important to improve them? How would those relationships impact the realization of my explicit and implied tasks?
- What technical knowledge would I need to engage the field competently? What was not happening in terms of career preparation systems that should or was expected? What constituted "career preparation systems?"
- Why engage the field? Would not simply issuing a request for applications for the position of PrepareRI Ambassadors lead to both assembling the cohort and messaging RIDE's desire to collaborate or, possibly, make amends?
- How could I leverage the current context to improve my efficacy? And what led to this current context?
- What would "success" look like in terms of the envisioned processes?

These questions required me to expand my understanding of RIDE's current context while becoming familiar with its historical context as well.

Review of Knowledge for Action

The realities that I witnessed at RIDE were simply current expressions of longstanding features in relational, educational, economic, and political landscapes. To better understand these features, I needed to know more about the history of the department itself, especially since the previous commissioner was still a topic of discussion a year after her departure. Because the PrepareRI initiative focused on the "skills [students] need for the jobs that pay," there was a connection being made between employment and career education. This connection required me to analyze employment trends in the state and further consider extant career preparation systems, especially career and technical education and its components. Something that did not occur to me to research until I started to conduct interviews was the disparity in levels of income among the state's municipalities. The sprawling estates and docked yachts of seaside communities stood in stark contrast with the dilapidated buildings and fresh graffiti I passed in Providence on the way to the office. Understanding these features, then, would provide a historical complement to the contemporary context with which I was familiar and would allow me to better engage the field.

Three Eras, One RIDE

Deborah Gist served as Rhode Island's commissioner of education from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2015. However, she continued to be mentioned well into my residency, a comment on the impact she had while in office. Because the influence she had during

and after her tenure was so pronounced, I identified three eras of RIDE: "pre-Gist," "Gist," and "post-Gist." Each of these eras was marked by characteristics that, when revealed, further shed light on the current context.

The Pre-Gist Era. By most accounts, prior to Gist's arrival, the distinguishing feature of education in Rhode Island was district autonomy or "local control." As one colleague who has been with the department for nearly a decade put it, "Local control is more of a cultural mindset than explicitly laid out in policy." But districts were, per the Basic Education Plan (BEP) regulations that were adopted one month before Gist's contract went into effect (and that had yet to be revised at the time of this writing), able to determine curriculum and define what constituted "proficiency" as it pertained to graduation requirements. While the BEP also cast RIDE in a leadership role, the department was, in fact, more regulatory, one that would respond when a local education agency (LEA) failed to meet expectations: "RIDE has a responsibility to exercise its authority under state and federal law to intervene in LEAs and schools that are not closing student achievement gaps, are not continuously improving, or are not reaching state performance standards" (Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009, p. 5). This reactive, instead of proactive or innovative, role seemed to distance the department and the field during the pre-Gist era.

The Gist Era. Education in Rhode Island under Gist was characterized by increased state involvement. Part of this was in compliance with the monitoring of the $75 million Race to the Top (RttT) grant the state was awarded in August 2010. But another impetus was an effort to improve student performance. While the state revised standards and curricula to increase rigor and added the New England Common

Assessment Program (NECAP) as a graduation requirement, much of the department's focus was on teacher quality. This focus turned what was distance between RIDE and districts into a wedge.

RIDE's efforts to improve teacher quality got the state's, if not the nation's, attention. In December 2009, Gist raised the scores on basic skills tests prospective educators needed to enter teacher training programs. According to Gist, "We have an opportunity in Rhode Island right now. We don't have a shortage of teachers. We have a surplus of teachers. This is the time to do this, when the system can afford to be more selective" (Jordan, 2009, para. 21). Gist then turned to teacher evaluations. She told *The Atlantic*:

> [M]ost professionals would be surprised to know [that annual reviews] weren't already in place. Professionalism is about being respected for the work that you do, being acknowledged for the work that you do, and being accountable for the work that you do. (Jordan, 2010, para. 4)

The review process that Gist put forward included a requirement that 51% of a teacher's evaluation would be based on student performance. Over half of the RttT money went toward an "Instructional Improvement System" and educator evaluation, emphasizing the importance the department placed on teacher quality. What got the most attention by far, including that of President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, was Gist's firing of all of the teachers at Central Falls High School in Central Falls, Rhode Island. Noted President Obama, "If a school continues to fail its students year after year after year, if it doesn't show any sign of improvement, then there's got to be a sense of accountability. And that's what happened in Rhode Island last week" (Tucker, 2010,

para. 13). Jane Sessums, president of the local teachers' union, had a different take, noting that teachers were apprehensive and that trust had been compromised: "Their job security, that trust factor, that's really important in any teacher-administrator relationship. I don't know if they felt as if there was a lot of collaborating going forward up to this point" (Tucker, 2010, para. 17).

Perceptions of Gist were mixed, with some applauding her for disrupting the status quo and others accusing her of laying all of the blame for low student performance on teachers. A colleague shared, "Like her or not, you knew where you stood with Gist." Slotnick, Smith, and Liang (2013) at the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTEC) studied her effect on the field, concluding:

> Finding Three: For many teachers, the accountability features trump the continuous improvement goals and philosophy in the new evaluation system.
>
> *"The entire evaluation is pressure packed with certification hanging in the balance. It should be on the improvement of instruction."* – Superintendent
>
> *"There are some powerful conversations taking place. That's the strength. That's the brighter side. But so much of the effort has been demoralizing."* – Principal
>
> *"If RIDE would reverse the connection to certification, teachers would embrace the emphasis on student growth."* – Superintendent (p. 11)

Gist made improving teacher quality a cornerstone of her administration. In the attempt to improve that quality, she messaged that she and, therefore, RIDE were in charge. During the Gist era, then, the pendulum swung from district autonomy to state control.

The Post-Gist Era. To get a better sense of where the department was, philosophically, under Wagner compared to where it had been under Gist, Chief Osborn

suggested that I compare RIDE's strategic plans for the respective eras. *Transforming Education in Rhode Island: Strategic Plan 2010-2015* (2010-15 Strategic Plan) was approved January 7, 2010, a little over six months after Gist started as commissioner. *2020 Vision For Education: Rhode Island's Strategic Plan For Pk-12 & Adult Education, 2015-2020* (2015-20 Strategic Plan) was initiated toward the end of Gist's term (October 2014) and was delivered August 24, 2015, not long after Commissioner Wagner took office. In function and form, the contrast between the two plans is stark; the former announces a "Gist/RIDE is in charge" ethos while the latter acknowledges and responds to this ethos by striking a reconciliatory tone to be heard not just by the field, but also by all of Rhode Island. The 2015-20 Strategic Plan served as a harbinger of a new era, one less of imposition and more of collaboration.

The accounts of how each strategic plan was developed immediately provide insight into the philosophies that guided the writing of and intent for each. The preface of the 2010-15 Strategic Plan reads:

> Since her appointment in April 2009, and taking the position on July 1, 2009, Commissioner Deborah A. Gist has established a vision of what Rhode Island schools can and will look like in the future. … [T]he Commissioner and her staff developed key objectives, impact statements and measures, and strategies for each priority area that are based on current research, state education policy, and national direction. (RIDE, 2010, p. 3)

While the plan does offer that "[i]nitial drafts … were shared with multiple stakeholders, placed on the RIDE website, and extensively reviewed by the Board of Regents, outside experts, and Rhode Island citizens," the degree to which stakeholders contributed to the

creation of the plan remains unclear (RIDE, 2010, p. 3). The 2015-20 Strategic Plan is introduced quite differently:

> PLAN DEVELOPMENT: MANY DRAFTS, MANY VOICES – This planning process was grounded in the principles of transparency, engagement, empowerment, and respect. Every decision – from choosing the state's future educational priorities to writing the strategies – was made by a 26-member community team. This team treated Rhode Islanders as their most important stakeholders, publishing drafts (or prototypes) early, often, and long before they were complete. After each prototype was published, the team made immediate revisions. Using this rapid-prototyping process, the team was able to make many small adjustments over a six-month period and in so doing, develop a plan for by, of, and for Rhode Island. (RICESE, 2015, p. 4)

By referring to "many voices," "transparency, engagement, empowerment, and respect," and "the team," the 2015-20 Strategic Plan casts RIDE as a partner, ready to collaborate toward excellence in education, as opposed to the lead agent of reform efforts.

The look of each plan also reveals something about the intent and tenor of its content. This appears to have been about more than simply aesthetic choices, but ones that provided insight, at a glance, into the respective messages. Sections pertaining to career education are reproduced, in part, in *Figures 2* and *3* below.

Objective AS3: Create a system of multiple pathways leading to college and career readiness.

Objective Measures:

By 2012 all LEAs will provide multiple pathways that prepare students for college and careers.

By 2015 85% of high school students will graduate and successfully transition into postsecondary education and training, apprenticeships, or employment.

Strategy AS3.1 Diversify the ways that youth and adults can prepare for and access college and careers.

- Create an inventory of current pathways, identify gaps, and develop additional pathways for Regents' approval.
- Engage critical stakeholders, related state agencies, educational service organizations, the business community, and national and regional experts in the development of a full range of viable career pathways.
- Ensure the implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate cross-LEA supports for English Language Learners, students with special needs, and others who have not reached proficiency-based requirements for exiting school.
- Launch, in collaboration with workforce cabinet partner agencies, a virtual learning network that includes coursework, training, and college e-learning, including a statewide virtual high school.

Figure 2. Snapshot of the 2010-15 Strategic Plan (RIDE, 2010, p. 15)

CAREER READINESS AND PATHWAYS

KEY OUTCOMES

- Students have the opportunity to enroll in flexible college and career pathways and programs that fit their needs
- Double the number of credits awarded to students participating in dual and concurrent enrollment courses of their choice
- Increase student participation in Advanced Placement courses by 11 percentage points
- Increase the number of juniors and seniors earning industry-recognized credentials by 5 percentage points

RIDE WILL

Organize and approve opportunities for student and adult access to college and career ready education and training programs that yield portable credits and/or credentials

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS CAN HELP BY…

- Expanding student access to early college and early career education and training programs that yield portable credits and credentials
- Expanding and deepening college and career counseling services, including the use of individualized learning plans (ILP) to inform youth and adult decision-making

OUR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PARTNERS CAN HELP BY…

- Expanding early college access programs and supporting students' participation

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY CAN HELP BY…

- Partnering with schools in the development and management of career and technical education programs

Figure 3. Snapshot of the 2015-20 Strategic Plan (RICESE, 2015, p. 21).

The 2010-15 Strategic Plan reads very much like a list of standards that districts and teachers are expected to meet in the name of improved student performance. These standards are aspirational and intend to "prepare all Rhode Island students to be internationally competitive in a global economy" (RIDE, 2010, p. 17). Often, the plan asserts that "LEAs will do" something by a particular time, reinforcing a sense that the department intentionally exerted control over the local education agencies during that era.

The 2015-20 Strategic Plan reads differently. In suggesting that other stakeholders "can help by …," the plan encourages others to see themselves in the work and to collaborate toward achievements. The language is student-focused and empowering, with the words "personalized" and "individualized" found throughout; the 2010-15 Strategic Plan lacks "personalized" and uses "individualized" twice, both in reference to improving teacher quality.

The strategic plans serve as proxies for the approaches RIDE took in the respective eras. The Gist-era plan reveals a top-down approach, with the field striving to fulfill the department's expectations for improved education across the state. The plan that followed reveals a different approach, a respectful invitation to the field to collaborate toward the improvements stakeholders envisioned. This latter approach is what I expected to encounter and hoped to perpetuate while assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The PrepareRI *Action Plan* asserts:

> Rhode Island faces a critical skills gap that, unless addressed, will leave high-skill, high-demand jobs unfilled. At present, less than 45% of Rhode Islanders'

> have a postsecondary degree or industry-recognized certificate, yet 70% of jobs in the coming years will require it. Moreover, employers have found that youth are missing the skills and experiences required by new economy jobs, and that existing K-12, higher education, and workforce development systems do not adequately meet their needs. (RIDE, 2016b, p. 20)

The emphasis of the initiative is on career readiness and career preparation systems in general, but discussions in which I participated equated this readiness with CTE. CTE was fraught with its own challenges and required consideration before engaging the field.

A requirement of the NSFY grant proposal was the inclusion of a needs assessment that revealed what fields of industry were emerging; established which fields were high-skill, high-demand; and assessed the degree to which the state's education system could prepare a workforce capable of filling high-skill, high-demand positions. Jobs for the Future (JFF), a "national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations in the United States," was tasked with conducting this needs assessment (Jobs for the Future [JFF], 2016, introduction). JFF found, "Although most CTE programs are RIDE-approved, the perception from business leaders interviewed is that many do not meet employers' basic requirements for entry level positions" (JFF, 2016, p. 7). JFF (2016) also surfaced that "though all students may access RIDE-approved CTE programs outside of their home school district through RIDE's open enrollment policy" there exists "pressure placed on students by both administrators and parents for students to remain in their home district, because funding follows the student out of the district" (p. 11). This pressure might also be why "some CTE directors said they are actively prevented from marketing their programs and

offerings to younger students even within their own district" (JFF, 2016, p. 14). The *Action Plan* (RIDE, 2016b) continues this critique:

- 42% of students enrolled in CTE are not enrolled in programs aligned to high-skill, high-demand sectors (p. 3)
- Only about a quarter of youth statewide are enrolled in CTE programs (p. 4)
- During the 2015-16 school year, of the 10,752 seniors who had access to CTE programs, only 2,890 (~27%) completed a CTE sequence and earned an industry-recognized certificate (p.17)
- While CTE is technically accessible to every student in any school under a universal enrollment policy, logistical barriers ultimately limit access, resulting in inequitable participation in programs (p. 7)
- [There is] the widespread perception in the state that CTE prepares non-academically inclined young people for the skilled trades and is the choice for those not attending college (p. 7)

The *Action Plan* maintains, "There is primarily only one comprehensive delivery model with uneven quality that is offered throughout the state, CTE, which is not widely popular among students and families" (RIDE, 2016b, p. 7). The goal of the plan, then, was to realign existing CTE efforts so that all students would have access to career pathways leading to high-skill, high-demand jobs.

Complicating consistency among CTE programs were structural realities that showed no signs of abating. The state's comprehensive high schools were associated with 10 regional CTE centers. These associations saw students either attend centers to participate in CTE courses or stay at the comprehensive high schools and take approved

courses there. Transportation to the centers, however, was an issue; the centers' boundaries and the school bus routes were not aligned, meaning that students wishing to attend some centers had to make alternative arrangements for transportation. CTE funding was another variable structure. The responsibility of distributing Carl D. Perkins money, the federal funding source for CTE, to schools throughout a region ultimately fell on the CTE centers; this was a long-standing practice by the time of my arrival. But because of a complicated funding formula, efforts by comprehensive high schools to recover the costs of offering their own programs (as opposed to sending students to centers) could be, as many stakeholders noted, "frustrating." In some districts, this frustration led to a limited offering of CTE programs in comprehensive high schools.

Other realities that were initiated immediately before and during Gist's tenure impacted CTE in durables ways. Early 2009 saw the beginning of the transfer of ownership and maintenance of the buildings housing CTE centers to their respective districts. Prior to this, RIDE owned the buildings while the districts provided staffing and programming. This effort was intended to improve upkeep of the facilities, many of which had fallen into disrepair under the ownership of the department. While the transfer of building ownership resulted in districts being responsible for all aspects of CTE centers – the physical plant, staffing, and program development – who could offer programming remained a source of confusion. A colleague shared that guidance issued by RIDE in 2012 implied that CTE programs offered by centers would remain proprietary unless there were need (e.g., a program was overenrolled or the distance between a comprehensive high school and a center made transportation difficult), suggesting that schools in the region could not offer the same programs as centers

otherwise. This suggestion of CTE-center sole proprietorship was not supported by the CTE regulations of the time (still in effect), leading to comprehensive high schools offering programs of their own. By offering their own programs, comprehensive high schools avoided the issue of transportation and were entitled to Perkins funding. This confusion over program ownership led the Chariho Regional School District to file a lawsuit against the department for allowing two districts, Narragansett and Westerly, to offer CTE programming of their own instead of sending students to the Chariho Area Career and Technical Center. In early-April 2017, the Rhode Island Superior Court ruled in favor of RIDE, prompting Commissioner Wagner to clarify "that although [an agreement between RIDE and Chariho] prohibits the approval of a career and technical *center* in the South County communities, it does not prohibit the establishment of CTE *programs*" (personal communication, Marcy 27, 2017, emphasis in original). In response, "Chariho superintendent Barry Ricci said he will urge the School Committee to appeal the decision" (Della Costa, 2017, para. 8).

In 2014, the Rhode Island General Assembly established a Rhode Island career and technical education board of trustees [CTEBOT] and declared "all powers, rights, obligations, and duties of the Rhode Island state advisory council on vocational education shall be transferred to the Rhode Island board of trustees on career and technical education" ("An Ant Relating to Education," 2014). Unlike the previous state advisory council, the CTEBOT was granted the authority to "furnish consultation to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education and the board of education [on] … the establishment, continuation, and discontinuation of career preparation programs" ("An Ant Relating to Education," 2014). This authority led to the CTEBOT writing

standards for approved programs, creating criteria for the skills necessary for entry-level work, and recommending that certain programs not leading to high-skill, high-demand jobs should no longer receive state categorical funds. The CTEBOT joined schools, districts, centers, and RIDE in shaping CTE programming.

The issues with CTE and their impacts on career readiness and workforce preparedness contributed greatly to the impetus for examining and making recommendations for the improvement of Rhode Island's career preparation systems. The JFF needs assessment and *Action Plan* revealed strained relationships among those organizations – RIDE, CTE centers, and comprehensive high schools – responsible for CTE programming. These relationships and the intersection of educational and economic realities in the form of employability would also have to be considered as I did the work.

Employment: Connecting Education and the Economy

The PrepareRI initiative sought to prepare individuals for high-skill, high-demand employment opportunities and meeting industry need. By underscoring that the Rhode Island workforce was currently experiencing and would continue to experience a "skills gap," the *Action Plan* served as a warning that, without intervention, this gap would not be closed and industry need would not be met. Knowing more about the economy in general, industry growth potential, and the history of unemployment in the state would allow me to better understand the need for and role of PrepareRI Ambassadors in reconciling education and workforce preparedness.

Table 1. Rhode Island Unemployment Figures, Jan 2007 - Dec 2009 (Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, 2016a)

Rhode Island Labor Force Statistics Seasonally Adjusted 1976 - Present					
Month	Year	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
December	2009	565,893	502,765	63,128	11.2
November	2009	565,731	502,435	63,296	11.2
October	2009	565,706	502,227	63,479	11.2
September	2009	565,840	502,191	63,650	11.2
August	2009	566,167	502,357	63,809	11.3
July	2009	566,718	502,772	63,946	11.3
June	2009	567,440	503,468	63,971	11.3
May	2009	568,225	504,485	63,740	11.2
April	2009	568,953	505,859	63,094	11.1
March	2009	569,506	507,586	61,920	10.9
February	2009	569,840	509,647	60,192	10.6
January	2009	569,987	511,983	58,004	10.2
December	2008	570,005	514,446	55,559	9.7
November	2008	569,945	516,869	53,076	9.3
October	2008	569,868	519,145	50,723	8.9
September	2008	569,829	521,262	48,567	8.5
August	2008	569,853	523,267	46,586	8.2
July	2008	569,939	525,203	44,737	7.8
June	2008	570,108	527,119	42,989	7.5
May	2008	570,379	529,044	41,335	7.2
April	2008	570,712	530,940	39,773	7.0
March	2008	571,066	532,748	38,318	6.7
February	2008	571,392	534,405	36,987	6.5
January	2008	571,666	535,893	35,774	6.3
December	2007	571,920	537,269	34,651	6.1
November	2007	572,187	538,609	33,579	5.9
October	2007	572,487	539,959	32,529	5.7
September	2007	572,793	541,297	31,496	5.5
August	2007	573,059	542,563	30,496	5.3
July	2007	573,256	543,693	29,563	5.2
June	2007	573,396	544,652	28,745	5.0
May	2007	573,526	545,450	28,076	4.9
April	2007	573,715	546,115	27,600	4.8
March	2007	573,987	546,655	27,332	4.8
February	2007	574,304	547,058	27,246	4.7
January	2007	574,574	547,275	27,299	4.8

The period from late-2007 to mid-2009, known as The Great Recession, was preceded by nearly a year by The Rhode Island Recession. As one stakeholder put it, "Rhode Island was one of the first states to enter The Great Recession and one of the last to exit … [pause] if it ever did" (personal communication, December 13, 2016). *Table 1* above shows the impact of the economy on employment in the state just before and

through the recession. While the unemployment rate would peak at 11.3% in mid-2009, it would hover around 11.0% until March 2012. Some of the sectors most affected, such as government, manufacturing, and construction, are captured in *Table 2*:

Table 2. The Rhode Island Recession and Recovery, Dec 2006 - Dec 2015 (RIDLT, 2016c)

	Rhode Island Recession December 2006 - August 2009 (in thousands)				Rhode Island Recovery Period August 2009 - December 2015 (in thousands)		
	Dec. 2006	Aug. 2009	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Dec. 2015	Job Change Aug 09-Dec 15	Percent of Jobs Recovered from Aug 09
Total Nonfarm	**495.7**	**455.9**	**-39.8**	**-8.0%**	**488.5**	**32.6**	**81.9%**
Total Private	**430.8**	**394.5**	**-36.3**	**-8.4%**	**428.5**	**34.0**	**93.7%**
Natural Resources & Mining	0.3	0.2	-0.1	-33.3%	0.2	0.0	0.0%
Construction	23.2	16.6	-6.6	-28.4%	18.4	1.8	27.3%
Manufacturing	51.8	41.0	-10.8	-20.8%	41.6	0.6	5.6%
Wholesale Trade	17.1	15.9	-1.2	-7.0%	16.6	0.7	58.3%
Retail Trade	52.0	46.9	-5.1	-9.8%	47.8	0.9	17.6%
Transportation & Utilities	11.0	10.3	-0.7	-6.4%	12.2	1.9	271.4%
Information	10.9	10.0	-0.9	-8.3%	8.7	-1.3	-144.4%
Financial Activities	36.0	30.8	-5.2	-14.4%	33.2	2.4	46.2%
Professional & Business Services	57.1	52.2	-4.9	-8.6%	64.3	12.1	246.9%
Educational Services	22.2	22.9	0.7	3.2%	23.8	0.9	128.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	75.2	77.0	1.8	2.4%	81.1	4.1	227.8%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	7.8	7.7	-0.1	-1.3%	9.4	1.7	1,700.0%
Accommodation & Food Services	43.0	41.0	-2.0	-4.7%	47.9	6.9	345.0%
Other Services	23.2	22.0	-1.2	-5.2%	23.3	1.3	108.3%
Government	64.9	61.4	-3.5	-5.4%	60	-1.4	-40.0%

Since the end of The Rhode Island Recession, unemployment in the state had decreased substantially. From its peak in mid-2009 to November 2016, the unemployment rate went from 11.3% to 5.3%, or about 55,000 more people employed. However, this focus on the increase in quantity of employees said little about the quality of the positions they filled or the preparedness of the workforce.

In January 2016, the Brookings Institute, in collaboration with Battelle Technology Partnership Practice and in response to a request made by various state stakeholders, issued *Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State*. Known among stakeholders as "the Brookings Report," the study endeavors "to provide a detailed assessment of the state's present situation and best opportunities for high-quality economic growth, with the goal of promoting an advanced economy that works for all"

(Muro & Katz, 2016, p. 2). The report not only discusses the state's economic realities, but also names seven potential areas of growth and the conditions required to realize that growth.

In considering the economic strength of the state, the Brookings Report begins with a comparison of the per capita personal income of Rhode Islanders and their counterparts in the neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut. In 1980, Rhode Island's per capita personal income was 92% that of Massachusetts and 80% that of Connecticut. In 2013, those numbers dropped to 82% and 74%, respectively. The report also highlights the racial disparity in income, observing that "the median income of black households now stand[s] at less than 60 percent that of white families and that of Hispanic households at just 50 percent [of white family income]" (Muro & Katz, 2016, p. 2). Although more Rhode Islanders were employed, their earning power, and therefore the economy, was weaker.

The Brookings Report declares the existence of "potential economic growth areas … that present opportunities for sustained growth and job creation. Potential economic growth areas by definition must connect to large-scale near- and mid-term growth opportunities" (Muro & Katz, 2016, p.33). Five of these areas are in "advanced industries, industries that invest heavily in R&D and STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] workers, prize innovation, and demonstrate high productivity, strong exports, and higher pay" (Muro & Katz, 2016, p.6). The Brookings Report asserts, "What matters most are STEM (or increasingly STEAM, with an A for arts and design) workers" (Muro & Katz, 2016, p.96). Then, the report turns to the realities of the talent and skills Rhode Island's workers possess:

- Rhode Island's current working-age population – while nationally competitive – lags behind New England educational attainment rates
- Rhode Island struggles to maintain the growth and educational attainment of its workforce
- Rhode Island's residents were barely more educated in 2014 than they were in 2009, and actually less educated in terms of the share of the population with only a bachelor's degree
- Rhode Island struggles to maintain sufficient talent pools in technical fields relevant to its growth areas, whether for near-term hiring or through its talent pipeline
- Students in Rhode Island are underprepared to enter STEAM careers
- Rhode Island's STEAM degree production is not keeping pace with that of leading benchmark states [which, in addition to the other New England states, includes Delaware, Minnesota, Oregon, and Pennsylvania] (Muro & Katz, 2016, pp. 97 – 100)

The report concludes this list by echoing what it observed in terms of the per capita personal income of blacks and Hispanics in Rhode Island: "Stark racial, ethnic, gender, and income divides have implications for the engagement of the state's people of color and low-income communities in its advanced and opportunity economy" (Muro & Katz, 2016, pp. 101 – 102).

While the Brookings Report offers a macro view of the strength of Rhode Island's economy in 2016, its long-term potential, and the role education could play in realizing that potential, the JFF needs assessment more definitively connects education with

employment, at least from a grade 9-14 perspective. JFF conducted interviews with over 80 stakeholders, reviewed existing data on the state's economic health and potential, analyzed the existing career preparation systems, matched this information to the objectives found in the *Action Plan*, and made recommendations on how to improve career pathways accordingly. These recommendations include:

- Use labor market information (LMI) for career and technical education (CTE) program development and evaluation
- Eliminate programs that are not aligned to high-quality career pathways
- Help educators and students gain access to and use LMI for making career choice decisions and for engaging with employers
- Work with comprehensive high schools to implement career pathways of their own (as opposed to concentrating these pathways in CTE centers)
- Provide greater access to data on student participation in, and outcomes of, career education
- Provide career guidance starting in middle school
- Set standards for and encourage dual enrollment (either through the state's Advanced Coursework Network or through partnerships with the three public institutions of higher education [Dual Enrollment])
- "Use an industry sector strategy to back map from industry needs to broad career pathways and enable the sector organizations to develop and aggregate work-based learning and other career preparation activities"
- "Establish and broadly vet a vision for career preparation" (JFF, 2016, pp. 6 – 14)

JFF's recommendations provide clearer insight into how education might realize

improvement in employment opportunities and, consequently, a stronger Rhode Island economy.

Different Demographics, Differential Wealth

Being based in Providence gave me a limited sense of the distribution of wealth across the state. Providence, the largest city in the state, is decidedly urban as reflected in its housing, schools, and the diversity among the people. Conducting research had me traveling to places like Barrington and East Greenwich, both suburban and white. As I would find, differentiating among communities by demographics would allow me to better anticipate stakeholders' reception of the work that I proposed.

The map below (*Figure 4)* shows the median family income for the state by municipality. For 2011 through 2015, Providence, Barrington, and East Greenwich had median incomes of $44,342, $132,000, and $132,321, respectively. If these figures were for a large city, to which the state of Rhode Island is often compared, and if the municipalities were neighborhoods, the disparity in income would still be significant, but at least the neighborhoods would be bound by cityhood. Instead, each town has a distinct local government and separate education system, with towns abutting one another differing in median incomes by $50,000 to $70,000.

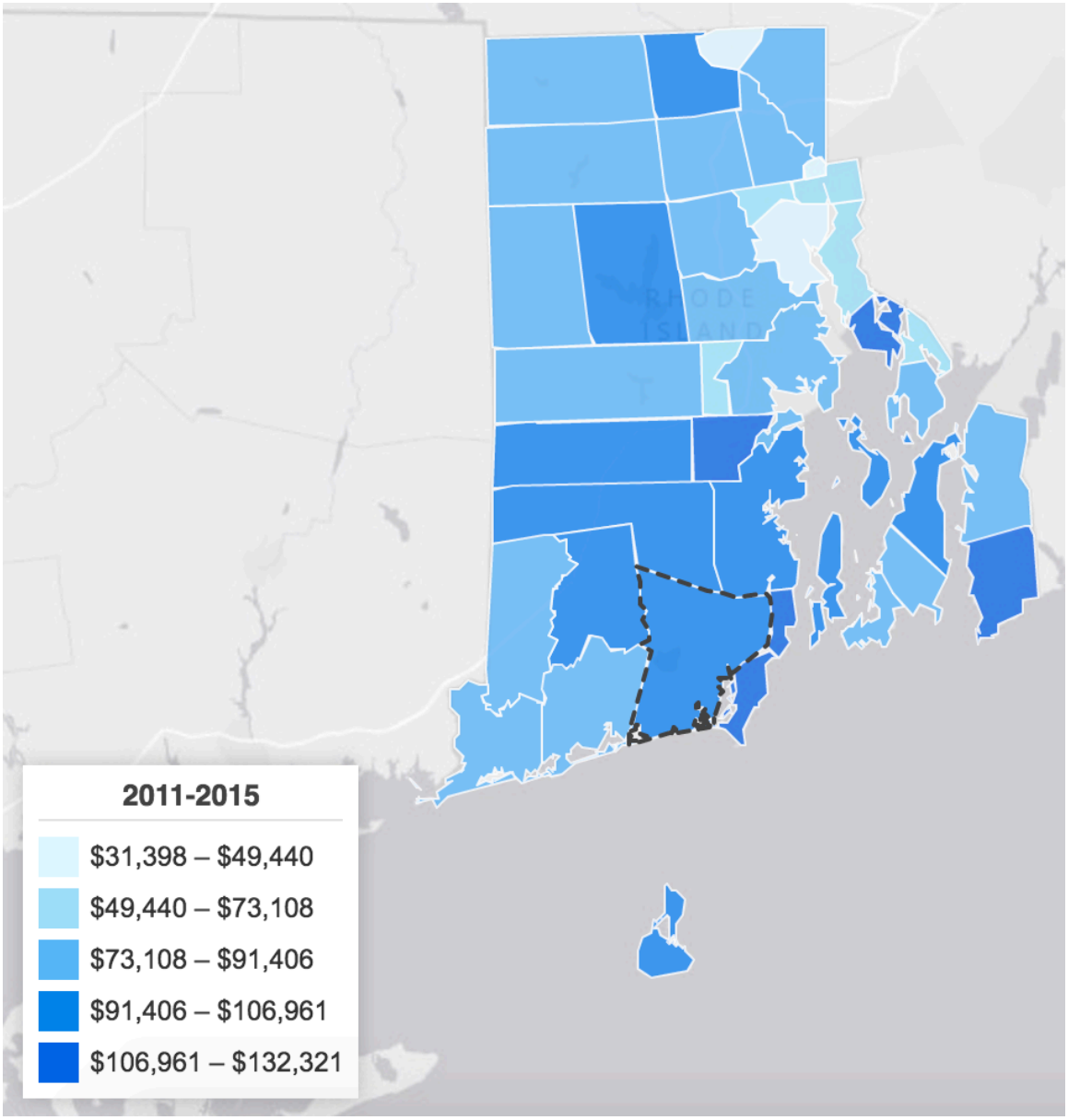

Figure 3. Median Family Income (Rhode Island Community Profiles, n.d.)

It was not until June 10, 2010, that the Rhode Island General Assembly approved a state funding formula (the last in the nation to do so) "that considers a district's revenue generating capacity and concentration of at-risk students" (RIDE, 2011, para. 7). According to a colleague within the department, prior to the formula, funds were distributed inconsistently and without regard to the demographics of the district.

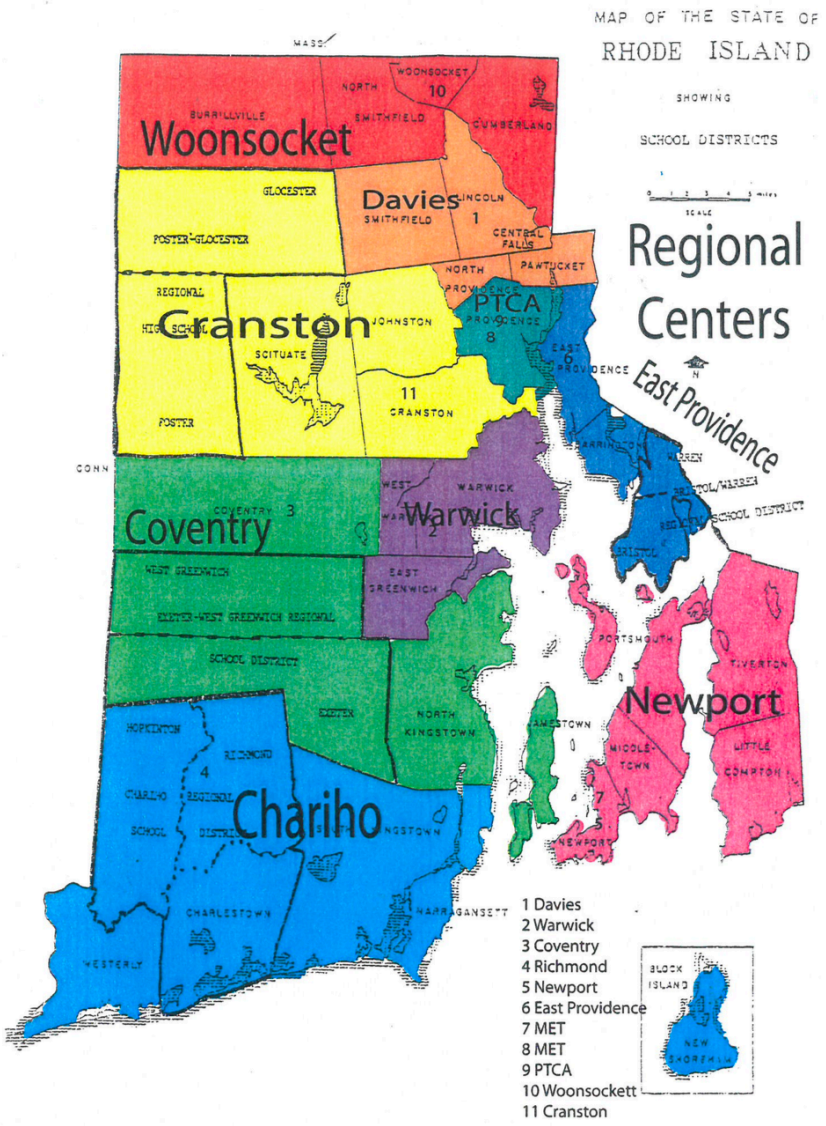

Figure 4. CTE Regional Centers (RIDE, n.d.)

It also appears that demographics were not taken into account when the CTE regions (*Figure 5* above), which assigned a comprehensive high school to one of ten CTE centers, were established. While the composition of communities within regions changed with time, boundaries remained static. In theory, these regions should have provided cohesion among districts that shared geographic proximity. In practice, however, regionalization of career and technical education resulted in the problems surfaced by the JFF needs assessment.

The Strategic Triangle: A Theoretical Framework

Mark Moore's "strategic triangle" establishes the value of public works in a way that is analogous to how the market establishes the value of what the private sector produces. The strategic triangle situates the public value of an endeavor in relationship to and as a consequence of the legitimacy and support provided by the authorizing environment and the operational capacity to realize that endeavor (see *Figure 6* below). Specifically:

> The triangle … serves as a device for reminding managers [those responsible for seeing the endeavor through] of the key functions and tasks that they will have to perform to help them define and realize their vision. Specifically, it highlights three different aspects of their job: (1) judging the value of their imagined purpose; (2) managing upward, toward politics, to invest their purpose with legitimacy and support; and (3) managing downward, toward improving the organization's capabilities for achieving the desired purposes. (Moore, 1995, p. 23)

Each of the components of the strategic triangle – public value, legitimacy and support, and operational capacity – are explored in further detail in an effort to envision how applying Moore's theory could realize both a cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors and, concurrently, a process for improving relationships between RIDE and the field.

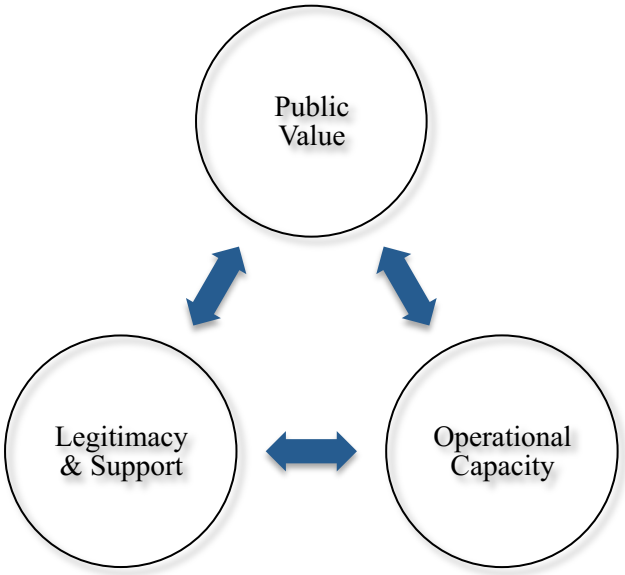

Figure 5. The Strategic Triangle (Moore, 2013)

Public Value. "Public value" seems relatively self-explanatory but is, in fact, an imprecise notion. In the private sector, the value of a product is established by the market, a reflection of what people are willing to pay for a particular good or service. While public works certainly need to be funded and budgets need to be considered, "value" in the public sector is something of a philosophical construct. Moore (2013b) offers, "The concept of *public* value could refer to the interests and values pursued, such as the well-being of others, the common good, and the just" (p. 61, emphasis in the original). He continues, "[V]alue is rooted in the desires and perceptions of individuals. … Public sector managers must satisfy some kinds of desires and operate in accord with some kinds of perceptions" (Moore, 1995, p. 52). Managers must address these desires and perceptions, which are fluid, in such a way that the intended value is achieved. "Public managers create public value," Moore asserts. "The problem is that they cannot know for sure what that is" since there is no definitive measure of public value (Moore, 1995, p. 57). Despite not knowing, there are methods for creating public value in general,

including “increasing the quantity or quality of public activities per resources expended” and “making public organizations better able to identify and respond to citizens’ aspirations” (Moore, 1995, p. 211). Establishing the value of a specific endeavor – such as the work of a cohort of education leaders – requires first managing (i.e., keeping within the realm of the realistic) and then meeting the public’s expectations of a particular effort. Managing and meeting those expectations, in turn, are affected, in part, by the legitimacy and support afforded the public manager by his or her authorizing environment.

Legitimacy and support. Public work and the public managers who oversee it are situated in the context of the organization responsible for realizing that work. That context is the authorizing environment. Moore and Khagram (2004) note:

> [The] “authorizing environment” includes the large number and wide variety of people in particular positions who authorize [public managers] to take action, or appropriate money for them to use. The authorizing environment also includes those who can influence the particular individuals who make these decisions and have reasons to do so. Together, these individuals can call managers to account for their performance, and choose to continue or withdraw the authorizations and money the managers need to operate. (p. 6)

These “people in particular positions” might include elected officials, the citizenry that elects those officials, or both. It might include students, their families, and the school personnel who serve them. The media also need to be considered. Regardless, legitimacy and support are imparted, not assumed.

An organization like a state education agency – a government agency – certainly

wields formal authority and power. Indeed, “a defining feature of government is that it has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force on society, and it uses this capacity routinely in its operations,” (Bennington & Moore, 2011, p. 6). However, this authority and power are shaped and bounded by statute and policy. Neither a government agency nor its representatives are able to exercise complete free will without consequences. Their efforts must by legitimated by the authorizing environment and supported by that environment politically and materially as they engage the public. Being transparent helps build this legitimacy and support

> by giving clear evidence of a public manager's willingness to be held accountable for the performance of enterprise he or she leads, and … by allowing citizens and their representatives to be sure that their conceptions of the public value to be produced by an agency align with the purposes the organization has committed itself to pursuing. (Moore, 2013b, p. 104)

Legitimacy and support are critical to promoting and sustaining efforts that have been deemed to have public value. Public managers play crucial roles in coordinating the energy that goes into realizing those efforts. But, in order to actually deliver something of public value, an organization must have the operational capacity to do so.

Operational Capacity and Coproducers. Of the three components of the strategic triangle, operational capacity might be the easiest to comprehend, but the most difficult to marshal. Bennington and Moore (2011) characterize operational capacity as “harnessing and mobilizing the operational resources (finance, staff, skills, technology), both inside and outside the organization, which are necessary to achieve the desired public value outcomes” (p. 4). An endeavor might be publicly valued and have

legitimacy and support, but without resources – operational capacity – it stands little chance of being actualized. Moore (2013b) offers encouragement by reminding us that legitimacy and support and operational capacity are interrelated, and that the former can be leveraged for the benefit of the latter:

> The link between building legitimacy and support, on one hand, and operational capacity, on the other, is the simple idea that effective advocacy for a public agency and its mission in the authorizing environment can be expected to generate a more consistent and more generous supply of resources to a given agency. (p. 262)

It would seem, then, that attending to one component of the strategic triangle positively impacts the others. Of course, the inverse is also true.

Above, Bennington and Moore refer to resources as being "both inside and outside the organization." This alludes to the fact that "some of [the] operational capacity lies within the organization, under the formal control of the managers, but much of it probably lies outside the organization's boundaries in the capacities of both organized partners and individual coproducers" (Moore, 2013b, pp. 126 – 127). These partners and coproducers are critical to the success of a public endeavor; they coordinate and cooperate, through either contract or will, with the public manager to realize the intended work. Moore (2013b) cautions:

> Remember that the strategic triangle focuses attention not simply on organizational capacity but overall operational capacity. When much of the operational capacity needed to achieve a desired result lies beyond the boundary of a given agency, public managers have to find a way to animate and guide the

contributions of external agents. (p. 262)

This animation and guidance are facilitated if the agencies or individuals already have a collaborative relationship, since "the ongoing relationship will create many opportunities for … informal agreements to arise. It is much harder if the relationship is intensely competitive or nonexistent" (Moore, 1995, p. 117). This suggests that public managers, in light of those external to the organization, must tend to not just the work, but also the relationships – those with collaborators and coproducers in particular – that are critical to realizing the work. As Moore puts it, "If public organizations are to depend on citizens and clients to help them achieve the results, the managers must devise means for increasing these contributions from outside" (Moore, 1995, p. 287).

Approaching the Work Using the Strategic Triangle. Understanding the components of the strategic triangle, their characteristics, and how they interact to produce a public good offers an effective approach to the work. This approach capitalizes on the fact that public value, legitimacy and support, and operational capacity reify each other; if actualized in the course of doing public sector work, the three components will act synergistically to sustain it. The lesson here is that *not* attending to one of the components will hamper the realization of the other two and either diminish the impact of the work or fail entirely to produce a public good. Heeding this lesson, then, should lead to success, which Moore (1995) defines as "increase(ing) the public value produced by [a] public sector organization in both the short and the long run" (p. 10).

Theory of Action

Because it is tailored to the public sector, the strategic triangle offered a lens through which I could view the work I would be doing on behalf of RIDE and the state. It

provided me with the language and tools necessary to take what I had learned about the existing and historical contexts of the department (including relationships and educational, economic, and political realities) and develop approaches to realizing the explicit task of assembling the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors and the implicit task of creating a process to improve relationships between RIDE and the field. Using Moore's theoretical framework, I arrived at the following theory of action:

If *I:*

- *Engage the field – the authorizing environment – in a way that acknowledges and respects existing relationships with RIDE;*
- *Communicate to educators with whom I engage the public value envisioned in the PrepareRI* Action Plan *and the role PrepareRI Ambassadors will play in creating that value; and*
- *Solicit educators' input in assembling the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors;*

Then *I will:*

- *Increase the legitimacy of and support for my work by helping educators see the value of their input;*
- *Develop a process for the identification and selection of ideal PrepareRI Ambassadors, who, once assembled into a cohort, will have the operational capacity to carry out the work assigned to them by the PrepareRI* Action Plan*; and*
- *Create a process for improving relationships with those in the field, which invites them to collaborate and enlists them as coproducers of a public good.*

Description of the Strategic Project

An overarching assumption I made while designing the strategic project was that awareness of the PrepareRI initiative and its intent would vary depending upon a stakeholder's distance, organizationally speaking, from those who participated in its creation and were responsible for its implementation. I reasoned that variability in awareness of the initiative would result in varying senses of public value, degrees of legitimacy and support, and amounts of operational capacity. To the Core Team, the Career Readiness Working Group, and heads of state agencies, including the governor, PrepareRI would be familiar, something they would support, and something that they would expect to be operationalized, especially in light of the $2 million NSFY grant. But to some in the field, awareness of both PrepareRI and the call for a cohort of Ambassadors might be little to none. For my work to be valued, supported, and operationalized, what that work entailed and its intended purposes would have to be known.

Based on the assumption above and guided by my theory of action, I designed a four-stage, iterative approach to the work that I hoped would culminate in both the naming of the inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors and at least initiate a process for improving the desired relationships. A brief overview of the stages of my strategic project, including pre-work, is offered below in *Figure 7.*

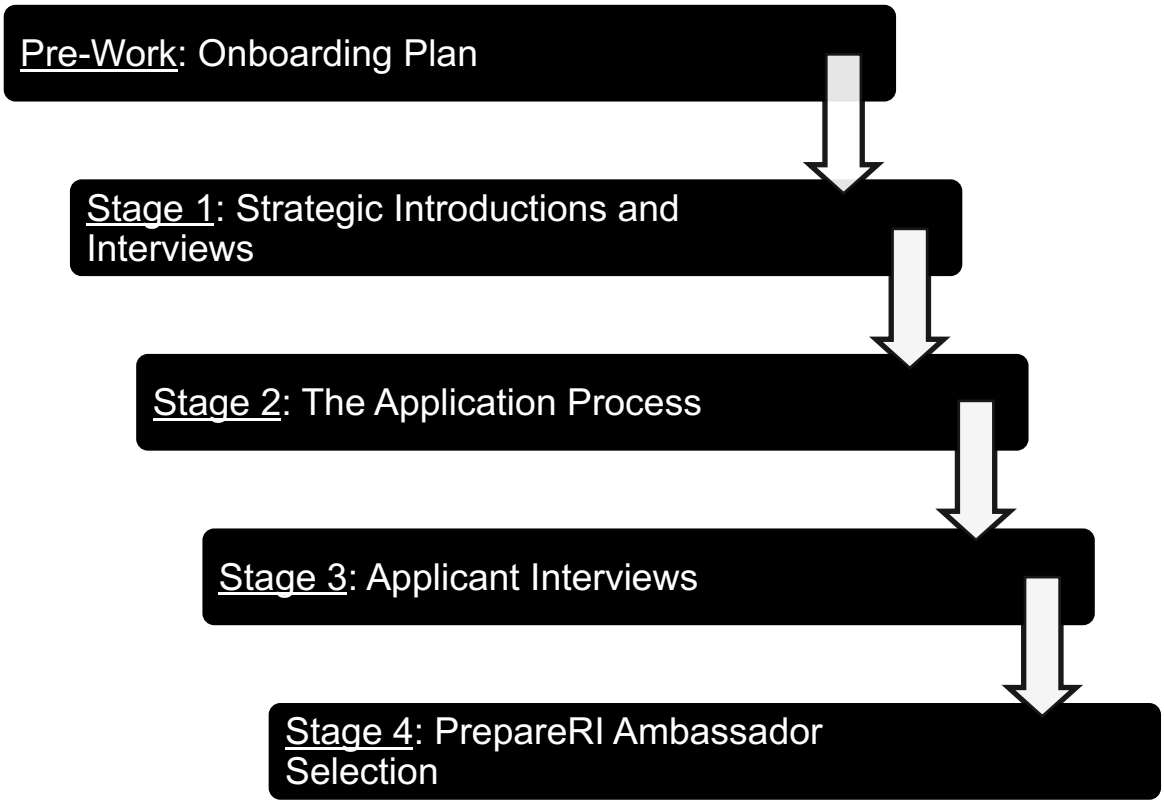

Figure 6. Overview of the Strategic Project

Pre-Work: Onboarding Materials

The creation of an onboarding plan was in response to Chief Osborn's assertion that "teachers are part of the solution" (personal communication, September 2, 2016). He also maintained that the onboarding "plan has to be gotten right," suggesting that anything less would fail to both communicate the intent of the initiative and attract those educator leaders who would be ideal PrepareRI Ambassadors. The 37-page guidance document I produced was intended to socialize the concept of the initiative, message its value, explicitly define the work of the Ambassadors, and provide a calendar of events (See "Appendix B: PrepareRI Ambassador Onboarding Plan").

The *Onboarding and Activating PrepareRI Ambassadors: Project Plan and Timeline* was broken into four sections, each with a particular intent:

- "Introduction to Context" presented the NSFY grant proposal process as one that "promoted cross-sector collaboration," "identified areas of need and or potential," and "created a three-year *Action Plan* that cements Rhode Island's commitment to career readiness." The language I used was intentionally optimistic and celebratory.
- "Definition of 'PrepareRI Ambassador'" brought forward the language used in the *Action Plan*.
- "Description of the Work" named the expected Ambassador duties, including writing a career readiness-related capstone and/or developing resources for use by the field, attending regular check-ins, preparing for regional meetings and the PrepareRI Summits, and "championing and promoting career education beyond the PrepareRI Ambassador experience," an expectation made explicit in the NSFY proposal.
- "Description of the Curriculum" situated Ambassador work in nationally-recognized teacher leader standards, set the goal of their capstones to be "answering real problems of practice that impact career education in Rhode Island," and named Design Thinking as the guide for contemplation, discussion, and writing. The "real problems of practice" are found in Appendix A of the onboarding plan; I named these problems of practice by (literally) highlighting topics in the *Action Plan* that could be owned and managed by educator leaders given their organizational positions and degrees of access to data.

Without question, the onboarding plan is a lengthy document. It was intended to be exhaustive and, for the most part, inward-facing, i.e., to be used within RIDE when

recruiting and training Ambassadors, both the inaugural cohort and future cohorts.

Stage 1: Strategic Introductions and Interviews

Conducting interviews with stakeholders was critical to my work. I visited parts of Rhode Island other than Providence, which gave me a better sense of the demographics of the various municipalities and how those municipalities might be served by the PrepareRI initiative. I was able to assess what efforts were either already aligned to the envisioned career readiness or could be leveraged to do so. And I was able to introduce myself to strategic partners, those who would be willing to being interviewed, interested in learning more about the PrepareRI initiative, and open to sharing information that I could use when developing the PrepareRI Ambassador application and selection processes.

"Strategic partners" (respondents) should be given further consideration. While I created the language for my virtual introduction, it was Chief Osborn who sent emails on my behalf (see "Appendix C: Language for Introductory Emails"). Respondents shared a number of qualities: they were all K-12 educators, from teachers to superintendents; they were familiar with current efforts to realize high-quality career pathways (but not necessarily PrepareRI); each had a reputation for being open-minded, innovative, and respected, locally and across the state; and each held a position of influence, one that could lend legitimacy and support to my work. These were the people with whom having a relationship would be critical to my work, those who would make the ideal collaborators and coproducers.

Of all the work I did on the strategic project, I placed the greatest emphasis on the interviews. In anticipation of each meeting, I sent a list of exploratory questions that I felt

the answers to which would allow me to learn something about the person as an educator, their perspectives on career education, and their thoughts on how to improve career preparation systems (see "Appendix D: Interview Questions_General"). Sending the questions in advance was also an attempt at complete transparency.

The initial one-hour, in-person meetings started with me introducing myself and sharing my goals for the meeting. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss each of the interview questions in detail, with room to deviate from the script when the discussion allowed for it. I offered what I knew about PrepareRI, which, in November and December 2016, was restricted to the work done preparing the NSFY grant proposal and the possibility that Rhode Island could be awarded a $2 million grant to examine and improve career education; "PrepareRI Ambassadors" were referred to as "Career Education Leaders from the field" at this time since a decision on the award had yet to be made. I spent more or less time discussing the initiative depending on the respondent's familiarity with it.

There were four realities of which I was cognizant while conducting interviews, especially the initial ones: the respondents had no relationship with me; the respondents did have relationships with RIDE and those relationships probably varied in strength and quality; the respondents, collectively, were "the field" and would, ultimately, be responsible for implementing the work and changes envisioned in the *Action Plan*; and the respondents would have varying impressions of the value of the PrepareRI initiative depending on the state of career education, real or perceived, in their school or district. I addressed each of these during the interview, which I hoped messaged my sincerity, my interest in learning from them, and my interest in further collaboration.

Realizing that we had just been introduced, I endeavored to first find common ground with each respondent. Having been a mathematics teacher, an English-learner education department chair, an administrator, and a member of numerous district-level teams (which saw me work closely with three superintendents over 11 years), I was able to connect and empathize with each respondent in at least some small way. I billed myself as an "educator advocate," someone who, because of the positions held, knew that education was a challenging profession plagued by innovations that "soon shall pass." I shared that I did not want the PrepareRI initiative to be a passing innovation and that I believed its impact would be greater with their input than without.

After explaining the work to be done, both in terms of career education in general and Ambassadors specifically, I asked respondents what factors, if any, would enable or impede that work; this included RIDE as a potential factor. This question served two purposes. One was to generate real data in terms of factors that could advance or hinder my and the Ambassadors' efforts. The other purpose was to get at least a glimpse of the field's relationship with RIDE. Most respondents readily offered this information.

Realizing that (1) the respondents were the field and that they would be doing the work of improving career preparation systems and (2) it was possible that, from their vantage point, there was nothing wrong with career education, I asked: "What do you think is going well when it comes to career education in your system and how can that be applied to systems across the state?" This question communicated that I was not there to "fix them or their school/district" (something I actually said) and encouraged the respondent to think more broadly and more deeply than if I asked, "What's wrong with Rhode Island's career preparation systems?" The question was also intended to message

an eagerness to listen to and learn from their perspectives. The "how can that be applied to systems across the state" part was an implicit invitation to the respondent to see himself or herself in the work.

The initial meeting was only the first of five intentional interactions. With each subsequent interaction, respondents and I spoke more deeply about the economic state of Rhode Island, envisioned what high-quality career pathways might look like, and collaborated on naming the qualities for the ideal PrepareRI Ambassador. The progression of interactions was:

- Sending a follow-up email after the initial meeting that expressed gratitude and also requested introductions to others who might be interested in either collaborating or serving as an Ambassador
- Sending an email with an informational flyer attached and a request for a second interview (see "Appendix E: Informational Flyer, 'Creating High-Quality K-12 Career Pathways'")
- Conducting a second interview, this time asking more specific questions about career readiness and about how high-quality pathways leading to high-skill, high-demand jobs might be created. The informational flyer was also discussed.
- Requesting a third meeting, this time to discuss the PrepareRI Ambassador initiative and solicit names for the inaugural cohort

Interviews and meetings were iterative and sequential. All interviewees went through the same process – from introductory interview to third meeting – in an intentional effort to foment and cultivate relationships. (A compilation of respondents' comments, in slightly redacted form, can be found in "Appendix F: Interview Notes").

Stage 2: Initiating the Application Process

On January 11, 2017, it was officially announced that Rhode Island was one of ten states to win the $2 million New Skills for Youth Phase 2 grant. On January 30, 2017, JPMorgan Chase presented the award to Governor Raimondo and Commissioner Wagner in a ceremony attended by members of multiple state agencies, educators representing grade levels K-16, students, employers, community members, and media. On February 3, 2017, the following request for applications went out in the "Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo" (Field Memo) in the "Notes from Commissioner Wagner" section (*Figure 8* below):

3. Calling all educators – apply for PrepareRI Ambassadors opportunity

As announced this past Monday, January 30, the $2 million New Skills for Youth grant will fund Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI), a statewide initiative to improve access to skills-based education and training for high-skill, well-paying careers. To help realize this work, RIDE is calling for PrepareRI Ambassadors: talented, dedicated, visionary individuals whose efforts and expertise will positively impact all students in all schools across the state.

PrepareRI Ambassadors will: analyze existing career preparation systems; identify areas of strength and of growth in K-12 career education; and create resources and toolkits accordingly. This is a part-time commitment, allowing Ambassadors to attend to their full-time responsibilities while influencing state-level policy decisions and developing tools to support their peers.

The application can be found here and is open to all K-12 educators.

The PrepareRI Ambassador application window closes on **March 3, 2017**. Each member of the inaugural cohort will receive a stipend of $5,000 for contracted services from April 2017 to June 2018.

Questions should be directed to Derek Niño, Office of College and Career Readiness, either by phone at 401-222-8472 or by email at derek.nino@ride.ri.gov.

Figure 7. Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo (2016, February 3, Sec. 3)

I wrote both the request for applications and the PrepareRI Ambassador application (see "Appendix G: PrepareRI Ambassadors – Application"). I served as the point person for the application process (something that publicly confirmed my involvement in the overall effort and that I hoped would earn me a bit of name

recognition in the field). The application was directly emailed to educators across the state instead of just superintendents, the normal practice, which increased its visibility. The Field Memo was repeated February 3, 6, 10, 17, and 24, furthering this visibility. On March 3, it was issued with a reminder that the deadline for submitting the application had arrived. Since only 17 applications had been submitted by that date, the Memo was issued again March 10 with the announcement that the deadline had been extended to March 24. In total, 29 applications were submitted. Taken together, the announcement that Rhode Island had won the NSFY grant, the presentation of the award, and the request for applications initiated the application process in a very public way.

The application consisted of three parts. One was a résumé, standard fare for an application. Another part was a "Confirmation of Commitment," which "asked [applicants] to consider what being a PrepareRI Ambassador entails and to make a commitment in light of that consideration." The last, and most critical, part was the "Application Project Proposal," which required applicants to rank order by interest one of five areas of concern found in the *Action Plan* and submit a plan for resolving that area of concern/greatest interest. The proposal served the practical purpose of a writing sample while providing insight into the applicant's knowledge of and vision for career education.

Stage 3: Applicant Interviews

The applicant interview process was broken into two steps: selection of applicants based on the strength of their applications; and interviewing the applicants accordingly. What guided the evaluations of the applications and the applicant interviews, in part, were the data from interviews conducted in the field. The goal was to identify PrepareRI Ambassador candidates who could both meet what the field indicated was needed in an

educator leader working on behalf of an entire and deliver what the *Action Plan* envisioned for improved career preparation systems.

Originally, $150,000 – $50,000 from the NSFY grant and $100,000 from the state – had been earmarked to fund two cohorts of PrepareRI Ambassadors over a period of two years. In January 2017, Chief Osborn shared that the state allotment had been rescinded, leaving $50,000 for 10 stipends of $5,000 each. This smaller budget affected the number of Ambassadors that could be selected (no more than ten), the fate of the program itself (selecting 10 Ambassadors would deplete funds with the first cohort), and the composition and quality of the cohort (fewer Ambassadors meant that each needed a expanded skill set and broader vision in order to represent a larger part of the field than if there were more Ambassadors). The emphasis on cohort composition and quality meant that, effectively, an Ambassador's return on investment needed to be considered.

Based on field-generated data, my understanding of the *Action Plan*, and the recent changes in the budget, four criteria were used to evaluate application materials: the applicant's knowledge of career education and career and technical education; his or her educational attainment and area(s) of study; quality of application (i.e., completeness); and quality of proposal. Each criterion was scored 1 through 5, the scores were added, and applicants scoring the highest were invited to interview for the position. Eight applicants were interviewed after the original deadline closed March 3, 2017, and another 11 were interviewed after the close of the extended deadline on March 24, 2017.

Each of the 19 qualified applicants was invited to a half-hour interview, although an hour was scheduled to allow for the possibility that the interview went longer. The interview started with me providing the applicant with a copy of the questions I would be

asking (see "Appendix H: PrepareRI Ambassador Applicant Questions"). I also shared that "this will be a conversation about career education, not an interview." Providing the interview questions and having "a conversation" were ways of being transparent and modeling the collaborative spirit I hoped the Ambassadors would embrace and perpetuate.

The applicant interviews were scored along four criteria – different criteria than those used for the applications but, again, informed by the data generated in the field. These criteria included: possessing knowledge of career education and CTE; answering questions completely and concisely; having a statewide vision for career education and CTE; and demonstrating the potential to be a team player. Each criterion was scored on a scale of 1 through 5, the scores were added, and the applicants who scored the highest were then considered for the PrepareRI Ambassador position.

Stage 4: PrepareRI Ambassador Selection

To this point, aside from the introductions, I was responsible for every aspect of the process for assembling the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors. The responsibility of making the final selection, however, was shared with Chief Osborn, Director Darrow, and recently-hired Performance Management Executive Kirtley Fisher. Of the 19 applicants I interviewed, 12 scored high enough on their interviews to warrant further consideration. The fact that no more than 10 Ambassadors could be selected required the four of us to focus on each applicant's: experience with career education and/or CTE, including a contribution to an existing successful curriculum or program; reputation in the field, current position, and his or her potential to leverage both for maximum personal and political reach; and leadership potential. Five of the 12 stood out from the rest and were

chosen immediately. Two more were seriously considered and were interviewed a second time, by phone, by Osborn and me; one of the two was named an Ambassador.

The members of the inaugural PrepareRI Ambassador cohort were selected on April 25, 2017. I wrote an official brief (revised by Osborn and Fisher) to be used when the cohort was announced, which asserted that "PrepareRI Ambassadors are a cohort of educator leaders from across Rhode Island that serve in a variety of roles and are unified around the goal of career readiness for *all* students" and revealed that "the inaugural cohort … includes teachers, a counselor, a school-based coordinator, an administrator, and a district-level director representing traditional public schools, career and technical education schools, and a charter public school" (see "Appendix I: Inaugural PrepareRI Ambassador Cohort Introduction_Brief"). At the time of this writing (early-May 2017), no announcement had been made, something that had been anticipated for mid-April 2017. Regardless of the announcement, the inaugural cohort of PrepareRI had been assembled.

Evidence

The design of the strategic project called for me to:

- Engage the field to: socialize the PrepareRI initiative and the PrepareRI Ambassador piece; gather data that would inform the Ambassador application and selection process; and gain insight into the existing relationships between RIDE and the field;
- Develop a process, from application to selection, for assembling a cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors; and
- Create a process for improving relationships between RIDE and the field.

I now offer evidence that I realized each of the above to varying degrees of success. I also offer collateral evidence that was generated while attending to my three main objectives; this collateral evidence would later inform not only the processes for assembling the cohort and strengthening relationships, but would also play a large part in my overall learning.

Engaging the Field

Nineteen pages in length, Appendix F documents the notes I took (in redacted form) during interviews with 31 respondents, 13 from within RIDE and the balance in schools and district offices across the state. Interviews conducted in schools and districts often led to further discussions and observations that were not formally captured, but did provide insight into school and community contexts. I expand on those discussions and observations and that insight here as well.

Educator Perspectives. As I had assumed, not everyone with whom I engaged had heard of the PrepareRI initiative or the Ambassador piece. This required sharing a bit of the history of the NSFY proposal and the consequent award, explaining the *Action Plan* and the envisioned improvement to the state's career preparation systems, and detailing the Ambassadors' proposed involvement in that improvement. That what I communicated was heard is evidenced in the responses I received, especially those pertaining to Ambassadors. One respondent offered, "When it comes to … Ambassadors, it will be important to message what the work is, who will do the work, and how that work will be of value to the community." Another respondent echoed this: "[Be sure to] name what the Ambassadors are going to do." A superintendent suggested that Ambassadors could offer technical assistance and could facilitate "dreaming together."

One respondent was clear that expectations for Ambassadors should be explicit: “Put on paper the roles for each; ” “Ambassadors have to own the need;” and “Set goals and deadlines – in a year, what will the Ambassadors have accomplished?” A respondent highly involved in the Rhode Island Association of School Principals (and in a position that afforded a statewide perspective) offered that she saw value in the initiative but expressed doubt that I would successfully convince most school leaders of the cohort’s worth. She maintained, “[P]rincipals haven’t been part of the NSFY or career preparation system discussions, [so] it might be too late to get them onboard with the idea of Ambassadors.”

Two themes found among responses provide insight into both how the department was perceived and the strength of the relationships RIDE had with those in the field. One theme pertains to data collection. Seven respondents asserted that the department would ask for information, often CTE-related, but did not provide a data entry system or some other mechanism by which that information could be collected consistently. They saw value in being able to compare student performance data for various programs across the state, especially if those programs were to be improved, but doubted that RIDE would have the capacity to make those comparisons any time soon. Another theme found in the responses centers on the department’s failure to see efforts through to completion. Four respondents were adamant that “there is no follow-through by RIDE,” which caused me to wonder if a new endeavor such as the PrepareRI initiative would be met with skepticism. These two themes betrayed a sense of frustration with the department.

A number of individual responses were similarly critical of RIDE. One

respondent offered, “There’s little communication of expectations and what is required to meet those expectations. We get no support [from the department].” A district-level administrator maintained, “RIDE isn’t felt in the field, meaning that it really isn’t more than an legislative body.” A distinguished teacher observed, “Many of these [CTE] programs are in protectionist mode,” alluding to the possibility that state categorical funds could be withheld from those programs, like Cosmetology and Baking & Pastry Arts, deemed to not lead to high-skill, high-demand jobs. A superintendent was clear that “RIDE needs to build trust – what’s being communicated keeps changing. [In terms of CTE, the department] needs to get right on the funding formula, since funding affects relationships and trust.” These comments are highlighted because they suggest that, at least with some, relationships between those in the field and the department could be improved.

Observations and Conversations. Engaging with the field produced more than just the formal responses I captured in my interview notes. Driving to interviews gave me an actual sense of the communities that would be served by the improved career preparation systems called for in the *Action Plan*, a sense that could not be garnered through research alone. Once at the sites, I had the opportunity to observe a sample of the state’s existing expressions of career education (really, CTE) and to speak with academic and career and technical educators. These observations and conversations led to a better understanding of what would be needed from the cohort of Ambassadors.

My travels took me to 16 of Rhode Island’s cities and towns. Traveling from RIDE’s offices to the Portsmouth district office took me from the urban settings of downtown Providence to a picturesque suburb situated on Aquidneck Island. Visiting

Lincoln, Johnston, and Smithfield High Schools had me going south on the tree-lined I-295, especially beautiful in the fall. McCourt Middle School in Cumberland was nestled among the quaint homes of a blue-collar neighborhood, while the North Providence district office could have been confused for a shop in a strip mall. And staying in an apartment I rented on the west side of Providence meant that I fell asleep and awoke to sirens blaring, dogs barking, and buses and trash trucks parading up and down my street.

I visited one elementary school, two middle schools, nine comprehensive high schools, and one CTE center. Classical High School (a magnet school), Central High School (a comprehensive high school), and Providence Career and Technical Academy (PCTA, a CTE center), sit next to each other and across from the Providence Public Schools district office. Of all the schools I visited, their student populations were the most diverse, reflecting their urban settings. All of the other schools were predominantly white; I cannot remember seeing a student (or teacher) of color during my review of the CTE programs at Mt. Hope High School in Bristol.

PCTA was the only CTE center I visited; the four hours I spent there gave me a better sense of what CTE looked like in an urban setting. Because it is a center, PCTA is outfitted differently than the comprehensive high schools, with a fully-equipped woodshop, bays to work on cars, a restaurant-style kitchen, a huge bakery, and a cosmetology department that could accommodate roughly 40 clients. The students I met in the CTE courses were engaged and focused, especially in the robotics class. This engagement and focus contrasted markedly from the academic courses I observed at PCTA, which were housed in classrooms physically distinct from where CTE classes were conducted. Instead of the energy I saw in the woodshop or among the student auto

mechanics, students in one English class were apathetic. Of the 18 students, all of color, listening to their teacher analyze a play, 12 had their chins on the palms of their hands and the rest sat quietly with their hands folded in their laps. This persisted for the ten minutes I observed the class; my observation of a geometry class was remarkably similar.

Career and technical education at comprehensive high schools included programs such as international business, television production, design and engineering, and early childhood education. These programs did not require the specialized equipment that might be found at the CTE centers; one school converted an old conference room into a small film studio while at another school, a computer lab doubled as a design lab. The comprehensive high school expressions of CTE, held in classrooms where the same teacher taught other subjects, had a more academic feel, unlike at PCTA, where CTE and core content were distinct.

As I walked the schools I visited – sometimes escorted by the respondent, sometime unaccompanied – I had the opportunity to speak with students and teachers. CTE students at both PCTA and comprehensive high schools displayed similar levels of engagement and energy; they could describe in great detail on what it was they were working and the objectives of the lesson. Academic students at the comprehensive high schools seemed more animated than at PCTA. Teachers of CTE, some of whom had made mid-career shifts from industry to education, were, for the most part, just as focused and passionate as their students. Of note were the concerns of a cosmetology instructor and an early childhood education teacher. Not immediately knowing my role at RIDE, each made a plea to not cut their programs, programs they had heard might be discontinued. I clarified that I was simply observing, but each continued to share the

value and necessity of their respective programs. Their concern revealed an awareness of the CTE Board of Trustees and its ability to suggest that certain programs be discontinued.

Three district-level administrators shared that they valued CTE but chose to offer programs that were not RIDE-approved. Lack of RIDE approval meant that students were ineligible for an industry-recognized credential and that schools had to pay for programs out of their own budgets. The rationale each administrator gave was similar: Not offering RIDE-approved programs meant that they were not subject to the department's program evaluation process, which they found subjective and variable in quality, and that they also avoided the complicated and frustrating process of seeking compensation in the form of Perkins funds from CTE centers.

Positive comments for both CTE and the proposed PrepareRI work came from site-level personnel, such as a CTE coordinator or counselor, who felt supported by their administrator, either a principal or superintendent. Invariably, this supportive administrator valued career and technical education, often as a consequence of having been a CTE teacher or director. However, among those with whom I spoke, either through formal interviews or informal conversations, I did not hear anything said of RIDE that could be considered better than neutral. As I noted above, some called on the department to provide support and others simply saw it as a legislative body. Echoing this latter point, one administrator, frustrated by negative marks on her school's CTE evaluation, shared, "I just wish RIDE would tell us what to do so we could do it."

Developing a Process to Assemble the PrepareRI Ambassador Cohort

The PrepareRI Ambassador cohort was first proposed on September 2, 2016, and

was assembled eight months later. In the time that it took for the project to go from inception to completion:

- Research was conducted to better understand the relationships and realities – educational, economic, and political – that would inform the materials I would create and the interactions in which I would participate
- Interviews were conducted to generate more data and promote both the PrepareRI initiative in general and the PrepareRI Ambassador piece in particular
- A field memo was circulated that announced and promoted the PrepareRI Ambassador opportunity and that served as a request for applications
- Applications were accepted and then evaluated based on criteria informed by interviews with the field and by the PrepareRI *Action Plan*
- Applicants were interviewed and then evaluated based on knowledge, expertise, statewide vision, and collaborative spirit
- Prepare RI Ambassadors were named by a team within RIDE that considered the potential for cohort's collective reach and impact

The artifacts of my work can be found in "Context," "Review of Knowledge for Action," and as appendices, and include the onboarding plan, sample interview questions, the commissioner's Field Memo, the application for the Ambassador position, and the brief naming the Ambassadors. These artifacts provide material evidence for the steps taken in an intentional process that iterated toward assembling the cohort.

The materials I created guided my approach to the work (onboarding plan), socialized the Ambassador opportunity (the request for applications found in the Field Memo), and standardized the selection process (application and interview evaluation

criteria). Collectively, the materials provided a container for the overall process. Filling that container, i.e., assembling the cohort, required an understanding of the variability in: the demographics of communities and schools across the state; what those communities and schools expected from career education and how those expressions reflected what was valued; and the strength of relationships between RIDE and the field and how those relationships would impact collaboration. The data from the field – interview responses, my observations, and what I learned from conversations – shed light on that variability. Specifically:

- The differences in community demographics were reflected in the schools that I visited. Schools in urban and lower-middle class communities tended to be predominantly black and Hispanic, with higher-than-state averages of students eligible for subsidized lunch, receiving bilingual/ESL education services, and receiving special education services. Suburban schools were predominantly white, and the averages for the special subgroups noted above tended to be equal to or below that of the state.
- Many of the educators and students at PCTA saw career preparation as developing the skills that led directly to employment and income. Some educators at a middle school in a lower-middle class neighborhood, who noted that their students were from "blue-collar families and single-parent households," shared this school-to-job perspective. At the suburban, more affluent schools and districts, the perspective was different. One superintendent saw a robotics course "as the place to put calculus and physics into practice." Students I interviewed saw CTE courses as electives in an academic pathway leading to college. In the

urban and lower-socioeconomic status environments, career education prepared students to earn a living. In suburban environments, career readiness was in service of college readiness; college readiness was critical to success in college, which would *then* lead to a meaningful career in a high-skill, high-demand field.

- None of the data revealed strong relationships between RIDE and the field *with regard to career education*. (This emphasis underscores the fact that the scope of my work did not extend beyond this area of focus and that strong relationships may have existed in other areas.) As noted above, the department was seen as a legislative body that interacted with the field during program evaluations. The fact that some schools preferred to offer their own versions of CTE without RIDE involvement suggested that they valued autonomy, autonomy that allowed them to respond to their students interests and needs as they saw fit.

Community and school demographics, what was valued among the different expressions of career education, and the strength of relationships between RIDE and the field all varied in form and/or intensity. Revealing sources of variability impacted my understanding of what would be needed to improve Rhode Island's career preparation systems and colored the way I evaluated Ambassador applicants. I understood that local context shaped career education, resulting in differences in career preparation and its intended goals from school to school. Transforming career education would have to acknowledge these local differences while realizing a statewide goal of preparing *all* students for careers in high-skill, high-demand fields. In light of this, I evaluated applications and interviews based on what they said about Ambassador applicants' potential to address the local sources of variability while collaborating to develop

resources and toolkits that served all of Rhode Island. Those applicants who were best qualified to respond to both local and statewide need were selected for the inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors.

Creating a Process to Improve Relationships

While there might not have been strong relationships between RIDE and the field in the area of career education, there were certainly interactions between the two. The first step in creating a process to improve relationships would be to establish them in the first place. In an appeal to Moore (but stopping short of analysis), relationships can be established or strengthened through collaboration on and coproduction of something of public value. It is left to show my work to assemble a cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors encouraged collaboration and coproduction, critical components of relationship building and the foundations of a process to improve relationships.

What the artifacts and data show is that I engaged the field to conduct research, research that would inform the creation of a process for the assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort. Missing is evidence that I encouraged collaboration or coproduction while conducting that research and creating that process. I did leverage introductions made by Chief Osborn and others to gain access to the field, access that allowed me to: better understand the context of Rhode Island; identify those skills a PrepareRI Ambassador might need; and anticipate the success of the cohort. I applied this understanding to the creation of onboarding materials, an application process, and a selection process. This singular focus delivered the Ambassador cohort, the primary purpose of my project, but did not deliver a process to strengthen relationships, the secondary purpose. This realization undergirds the analysis of the evidence and provides

insight into what *would* be required to create the desired relationship-strengthening process.

Analysis of the Evidence

I approached the strategic project as something that I alone was to realize, a mindset that explains much of what transpired during the residency. Throughout the course of the project, my focus was on successfully assembling the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors. The analysis, then, begins with revealing my definition of success and progresses to how that definition narrowed my framing of the work. I next consider context and how that could have been leveraged more completely. I then turn to the design of my project; the project did develop a process for assembling the intended cohort but failed to create the process for strengthening relationships between RIDE and the field. Finally, I examine my theory of action, which at first seems aspirational and inclusive but actually reflects and even reinforces a solitary pursuit. I reenvision my theory of action and consider how, in light of my analysis, it could have guided an approach that realized both the cohort of Ambassadors *and* a process for strengthening relationships. Moore is referenced throughout to frame what did happen and, had I heeded his work more fully, what could have.

My definition of success for the project was limited to realizing the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort, seeing it through from beginning to end and crafting every aspect of it. The end would be signaled by the announcement of the inaugural cohort. This very narrow view of success and of when the work would end could have been expanded, increasing the scope (who would be served), scale (how many would be served), and sustainability of the endeavor (how long they would be served). Scope was affected by

taking a linear approach to how I engaged the field; I simply consulted with those to whom I was introduced instead of also considering how I could connect them. I regarded them as contributors, focusing on the depth of their knowledge and what I could learn from them as opposed to considering how I could facilitate a breadth of opportunities for the exchange of knowledge with them *and* others. Had I thought to connect respondents, not only would the scope of work increased, but also the scale. I conducted nearly 100 interviews with 31 respondents, but these were multiple, one-to-one interactions and almost exclusively with secondary educators. In a place like Rhode Island, where most districts serve 3,000 students or less, regional meetings could have been called with relative ease, increasing the scale of the work. Such meetings could have seen more educators, including those from the elementary school level, not just contribute to *my* knowledge, but to that of others in the same ecosystem; while doing the work, I could have facilitated district-wide collaboration. This collaboration, in turn, could have seen others formally and informally take on this work, increasing the possibility of long-term success (sustainability) as well as fomenting and strengthening relationships. To quote Moore (1995) again, "[C]learly the proper conceptual definition of managerial success [is] to increase the public value produced by public sector organizations in both the short and the long run" (p. 10). I focused on and delivered a short-term goal, when I should have set my sights on the long run.

The same focus that narrowed my definition of success restricted my concept and leveraging of context. This was unfortunate given the work I had done to not only identify relationships and educational, economic, and political realities in RIDE's current context, but historical context as well. Knowing this information benefitted me when

engaging the field; I was able to better understand why the issue of funding created acrimony between CTE centers and comprehensive high schools and why educators, after six years under Commissioner Gist, would expect RIDE-led endeavors to be impositions, not invitations to collaborate. I used my understanding of context to better engage *educators*, but the Rhode Island context included industry, politicians, and the media as well. Moore's (1995) perspectives on decentralization are applicable here:

> Such situations force managers to seek wide authority to regulate the conduct of the decentralized groups and to make that authority real and effective through a general process of political mobilization. It becomes essential to find ways to engage in loose networks of professions, interest groups, political associations, and the media in efforts to coproduce the manager's goals. (pp. 117 – 118)

Engaging these "loose networks" could have recast my work as a truly public, pan-sector endeavor as opposed to solely an educational one. This suggestion is plausible given my association with RIDE; the department is a state agency and, as I noted before, wields authority and power. This authority and power could have been leveraged to engage not just educators, but employers – who stand to benefit from the improved career preparation systems should they be realized – and politicians, including Governor Raimondo, who has established herself as a champion of Rhode Island's education sector. Had I taken advantage of this expanded, decentralized context, I could have mobilized more of the public to "coproduce [my] goals."

Again, focusing solely on assembling the cohort of Ambassadors led to the limited scope of the project and the failure to create a process for improving relationships between RIDE and the field. Were the work to be undertaken again, a revision of the

project design would see me capitalizing on the tremendous access I had to the field. In redesigning the project, I would first reconsider the questions I pose at the end of "The Task, Explicit and Implied," questions that I had hoped to answer with the evidence I generated. The questions serve a practical purpose, encouraging me to think more deeply about context and what I would have to know to navigate the state ecosystem. But something like "What were the existing relationships with the field like and why was it important to improve them? How would those relationships impact the realization of my explicit and implied tasks?" could be recast as "What were the strategic relationships that RIDE hoped to either maintain or improve, and could the work of assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort maintain or improve those relationships in some way?" A question such as "How could I leverage the current context to improve my efficacy?" hints at the "solitary pursuit" mindset to which I have already admitted. Instead, "How could I leverage the current context to ensure effective collaboration?" still acknowledges the influence of context, but places the emphasis on collaboration. And "What would 'success' look like in terms of the envisioned processes?" has already been addressed.

Next, I would think differently about "Stage 1: Strategic Introductions and Interviews." It is this stage that, if gotten right, would set the project on a trajectory toward collaboration and coproduction instead of one of isolated creation. Moore is clear on the benefits of already having "ongoing relationship[s]" with those in the field, and Chief Osborn used his to make strategic introductions on my behalf. These were appreciated and necessary since I was unknown at the time. The resulting initial interviews were valuable in that they introduced me to the field, provided me with the opportunity to share the envisioned work, and opened the door to further conversations.

To this point, the design of the project worked well and, consequently, would not be altered. Subsequent steps in Stage 1, however, would be.

Under the current project design, further interactions with those in the field focused on deepening relationships with just one person. Granted, each was a person of some influence, hence "strategic." But this focus either contributed to or reinforced the narrow scope of the overall work. One major change would be to solicit *lateral* introductions from each "strategic" person; often, Osborn's original introductions were to those high in their respective systems, like a principal, district-level director, or superintendent. Introductions made by these people tended to be down, not across, something I might have inadvertently encouraged by asking what was going well in terms of career education in *their* systems specifically. Valuable information could still be gleaned from those introductions, but the downward tendency – from superintendent to principal, from district-level director to site-based coordinator, or from principal to teacher – meant that the breadth of perspective shrank accordingly. For a statewide effort such as this to be effective, especially with so few Ambassador positions available, the broader the perspective, the better.

Another major change would be to approach and involve existing formal and informal coalitions. In mid-January 2017, I was asked by Director Darrow to work with Paul Williams, CTE specialist. Mr. Williams oversaw the work of school-based CTE coordinators (SBCs), educators tasked with, as the title suggests, coordinating the CTE programs at comprehensive high schools and CTE centers. SBCs were often retired principals, CTE directors, or CTE teachers who, per RIDE policy, were required to meet monthly. Here was a formal structure that saw people extremely knowledgeable in all

things CTE and career readiness in one place and willing to speak with me. Of note is that I had not heard of SBCs or their meetings until Darrow's request that I work with Mr. Williams. This made me wonder what role SBCs could play, if any, in the re-envisioning of statewide career preparation systems, especially since they were already working in the exact space that was to be improved.

After attending all SBC monthly meetings from January 2017 until the end of my tenure, I surmised that the SBCs added yet more variability. Some SBCs were full-time and others, part-time. Part-time SBCs worked anywhere from six to 30 hours a week. One SBC might work in relative isolation while another might be fully integrated into student scheduling, academic planning, and professional development. In short, some SBCs were valued at their sites and others were not. Despite this variability, I was still certain that, because they worked exclusively on CTE, I could learn from them. In fact, I was certain that other groups existed and other meetings, formal and informal, were also taking place. Had I to do over, in addition lateral introductions, I would ask for introductions to groups differentiated by position (such as assistant superintendent or principal), by system (school or district), or by geography (such as Chariho Regional School District, a district serving three municipalities, or Aquidneck Island). I would also consider attending school board meetings, PTA meetings, town hall meetings, union meetings representing various trades, and sessions of the General Assembly. Attending these meetings would: broaden my perspectives overall; superimpose practical knowledge onto my theoretical understanding of the Rhode Island context; and increase the potential for collaboration, including outside of the education sector.

If Stage 1 of the project were revised to create a trajectory that increased the

potential for collaboration and coproduction, then Stages 2, 3, and 4 would provide the *actual* work on which to collaborate and the material to coproduce. In Stage 2, I developed a process that saw applications submitted to and evaluated by me alone. What if this work were reimagined in a way such that the application and its evaluation criteria were pushed down to the school level and served as the basis for a site-based nomination process? What if the resulting site-based nominees then went through a regional selection process before being considered by the state? What if the applicant pool were expanded to include industry leaders and community members (as originally intended before budget cuts)? Something similar could happen in Stage 3. For instance, at the state level, applicants: could be interviewed by committee, which would share the responsibility of selecting a candidate; could participate in roundtable discussions with other applicants and evaluators, revealing collaborative and communication skills; or could workshop a particular challenge in teams, revealing problem-solving skills and propensity for teamwork (which was an approach used to select the team that wrote the 2015-20 Strategic Plan). And in the final stage, instead of only RIDE personnel, a committee of industry and cross-agency leaders could select the cohort. Obviously, each of these stages was expanded to include others in an intentional effort to: promote collaboration and coproduction among stakeholders, not just educators; increase buy-in across the state and across sectors; provide opportunities for interaction and collaboration; and initiate and strengthen relationships.

In light of all of the above, my theory of action would also need to be revised. Upon further consideration, it is neither as aspirational nor inclusive – nor collaborative in spirit – as it first appears. It begins with me engaging the field "in a way [that]

acknowledges and respects existing relationships" and then sees me "communicate to educators … the PrepareRI *Action Plan* and the role PrepareRI Ambassadors will play." To this point, no ownership of the work has been established and the possibilities of collaboration and coproduction are still real. This changes immediately, however, with the next point: "[If I] solicit educators' input in assembling the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors …." Note that I solicit *input* and nothing else. It is here that, philosophically, I take sole ownership of the work, which, again, relegates others to consultants, contributors, and maybe even consumers of the envisioned improvements, but not collaborators on nor coproducers of those improvements. My ownership of the project is cemented by "my work" in the next point: "[Then I will] increase the legitimacy of and support for my work by helping educators see the value of their input." The theory of action concludes with assertions that the intended cohort will be assembled and the process for strengthening relationships will be created.

A revised theory of action would see ample opportunities for collaboration. This emphasis on collaboration, here and in the above analysis, is in consideration of party line and theory. The 2015-20 Strategic Plan makes clear that it was a consequence of statewide collaboration, a distinctive feature of the current era of RIDE. RIDE-led endeavors, including this one, provide opportunities to message the party line of collaboration. In terms of theory, Moore (2013b) offers that, when it comes to creating public value:

> The public agency at the center of the production process does not operate alone. The operational capacity to produce public value includes "partners" and "coproducers," emphasizing the fact that most public agencies have to achieve

> results in contexts where they represent only a part (often a small part) of the overall system that produces desired results. (p. 123)

I reason that the greater the number of opportunities to collaborate, the greater the possibility for the coproduction of something of public value. In turn, through coproduction, collaborative relationships are forged and strengthened. This last piece gets closer to the desired process for strengthening relationships between RIDE and the field.

I now offer a revised theory of action:

If *I, as a representative of RIDE:*

- *Leverage the department's authority and call on stakeholders from across sectors with knowledge of career education, career and technical education, labor market information, and industry need;*
- *Coordinate multiple opportunities for us to collaborate on and coproduce a process for selecting a cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors;*
- *And facilitate an opportunity for us to participate in the actual assembling of the cohort;*

Then*:*

- *The inaugural cohort will be assembled;*
- *And, as a consequence of a shared experience, relationships between stakeholders and RIDE vis-à-vis me will be strengthened.*

This theory of action sees me promoting myself as a representative of RIDE for two reasons. The first is that the department wields authority, meaning that, by association, I do as well. This authority further means that calling on stakeholders to collaborate on an endeavor is not beyond my purview. Of course, since a goal is to improve relationships

with stakeholders – expanded from "field" to capture more than just the education sector – the call could not be overbearing. This leads to the second reason for me broadcasting my association with RIDE. The scope of the work is such that, for practical reasons, stakeholders might work with only me and one or two colleagues, if that. The goal is *not* for an improved relationship between stakeholders and me, a private citizen. The goal is for an improved relationship between stakeholders and RIDE. To stakeholders, I am RIDE, and the louder and more conspicuous I can make that, the more they will associate their relationships with the department, not me.

To actually develop these relationships, there need to be opportunities to collaborate. Ideally, these opportunities would be in-person, but one scenario I envision calls for consistent collaborations on online documents and materials. Regardless of the medium, I would need to be a collaborator, not the researcher and sole practitioner I was for the actual project; I reflect this fact with "us" in the second point of the theory of action. The better the collaboration, the stronger the relationships among collaborators would be. The closer my association with RIDE, the more the stronger relationships would be attributed to RIDE. This process of strengthening relationships through collaboration would work when applied to any endeavor, but doing so while coproducing a process for selecting a cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors would be the intent here.

Of note is that, in this version of the theory of action, references to "public value" and "legitimacy and support" are absent, with collaboration and coproduction among stakeholders taken as proxies for "operational capacity." This is because the PrepareRI initiative already has degrees of both public value and legitimacy and support by association with RIDE, the governor, other state agencies, members of industry, and

members of the education sector. It is also backed by a $2 million grant, additional operational capacity. If RIDE wanted to increase the legitimacy of and support for the PrepareRI Ambassador piece, it could do so by leveraging more of its authority, stopping short of being seen as imposing. Regarding the use of authority, Moore (2013a) offers:

> [When creating public value, it] is [important] to recognize the use of authority as an asset, and to note how much authority is engaged in any particular government enterprise. It may seem odd to think of the use of authority and force as a quantitative idea, but it is not hard to reckon the degree of force used to promote compliance with particular obligations or the magnitude of the burden that is imposed by any given regulation. (p. 16)

The revised theory of action, if actualized, would see an expanded field (stakeholders) have multiple opportunities to collaborate with me (in RIDE's stead) to develop a process for assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort, the primary purpose for the work. As explained, this collaboration would also strengthen relationships between stakeholders and RIDE, the project's secondary purpose. This is in contrast to what, according to the evidence, actually happened. While the primary purpose of assembling the cohort was fulfilled, it was done so in isolation – my isolation – instead of in collaboration. Because this collaboration, critical to initiating and reinforcing the relationships necessary for realizing a public good, was absent, so too was the evidence that I had created a process for strengthening relationships between RIDE and the field. Admittedly, I failed to deliver that process, the secondary purpose for my work.

Implications for Self

The evidence shows that I was able to see a statewide endeavor through, from

inception to completion, taking responsibility for every aspect of the work. The analysis shows that a key component – a process for improving relationships between the Rhode Island Department of Education and the field – was not realized. A wondering is how I could have led the project differently, in a way that would have realized the entire project.

The fact that I took "responsibility for every aspect of the work" reveals much about my focused approach and why that focus did not expand beyond that singular task. While I engaged others to better understand what was needed for a quality deliverable, I could have, at the same time, enlisted them in the coproduction of the process to assemble the cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors. While stakeholders and I got to a point where I could rely on ongoing *conversations*, there was no attempt at fostering ongoing *collaboration*. Upon reflection, there were opportunities to work with stakeholders in ways that were constructive and collaborative, not informative and isolated.

Taking responsibility for the work should not have been confused with owning the work. I did not own the work, at least not completely. RIDE did. The Core Team that wrote the *Action Plan* did. The state of Rhode Island did. What I did was facilitate an aspect of the *Action Plan* that called for the assembling of a group of education leaders to collaborate on improving the state's career preparations systems. Co-owning the work would have seen me collaborate on it, not just facilitate it.

Of course, work in any organization just has to get done at times. There might not be the opportunity to deliberate, facilitate, or even collaborate. At those times, it is important to remember what one has at his or her disposal to marshal the resources to achieve the task. Being new to Rhode Island and the department, my one-to-one

interactions were, in a sense, a way to earn the personal and positional authority I lacked as a resident. I realized that personal and positional authority would come with time. What I did not recognize, however, is that, by association, I immediately shared in the organizational authority of RIDE. This is particularly true since my work was external; personal and positional authority would had to have been taken into account if the project had called for working *within* RIDE. In the context of the field, I was "RIDE" and wielded authority accordingly. Had I recognized it, I could have leveraged this authority for greater effect.

The strategic project helped highlight: the types, degrees, and value of authority; the need to consider context and its impact; and the consequences of isolation when the job calls for collaboration. Going forward I will certainly consider the authority that I wield, individually and by association. This authority will be leveraged in different ways, depending on the task and the context. For instance, my area of interest is English-learner (EL) education. As the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction of a district with an emerging EL population, I could use my positional authority and professional expertise to shape curricula and pedagogy in ways that would respond to and anticipate the needs of this population. Similarly, in the role of educational consultant to that same district, I could leverage professional expertise and past success to establish my authority. In either role in the same scenario, I could see collaboration used to achieve the desired and expected effects. As an assistant superintendent, I could facilitate professional development experiences that called on teachers across departments or schools to develop and share EL-education best practices. I might join or even lead these experiences, messaging that, as a part of the organization, gains will be sustained. As a

consultant, I could hold workshops that disseminated the same best practices. To ensure that these practices were adopted and sustained, I could collaborate with content-area teachers and department chairs to co-create curricula tailored to their needs. These examples are not exhaustive, but now seem more real to me as a consequence of the residency.

My experience at RIDE has allowed me to better understand the value of relationships in achieving a goal or producing something of value. Going forward, then, I will endeavor to collaborate whenever possible, task and context permitting. I now see that excellence in isolation is no substitute for excellent collaboration.

Implications for Site

My strategic project spanned the last half of a ten-month residency at RIDE, but was informed by the entirety of my experience. In my time with RIDE, I learned quite a bit about the organization, the work that it does, and the context within which both the organization and the work are situated. These factors will have an impact on the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort and the work it will do. Here, I consider how what I learned and did can contribute to the future of RIDE in general and the PrepareRI Ambassadors in particular. Specifically, I make recommendations for: strengthening relationships within the cohort; nurturing the relationships I initiated; and using context to shape the Ambassador work in a way that addresses statewide need. All of these efforts rely heavily on the virtues of collaboration.

Ensure a Strong Cohort

At this time, the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort has yet to be announced and its

work has yet to commence. This is an opportunity to consider how that work could be approached in a way that strengthens relationships within the cohort first in anticipation of later engaging the field. This would also establish a proof point for the relationship-strengthening process Chief Osborn had envisioned.

The Ambassador position was conceived to be part-time, allowing Ambassadors to attend to their full-time responsibilities while contributing their expertise to a statewide endeavor. The nature of the position, then, restricts in-person collaboration during the school day and the school year to times and locations that are convenient to all. Because of this, virtual collaboration will be key.

The virtual Ambassador workspace does not have to be complicated. A draft curriculum for the cohort envisioned an elaborate, interactive online environment that allowed for real-time communication and collaboration that would also serve to archive work. In reality, that environment can be much simpler and already exists. In speaking with Holly Walsh, technology specialist at RIDE, at least 85% of the field uses the applications provided publicly by Google (Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Forms) and share and archive information via Google Drive. Using this environment would be free and familiar.

The nature of the online tasks should be such that they encourage collaboration. These tasks could include coauthoring a whitepaper, coproducing the materials for a professional development opportunity, or editing each other's work. Regardless, the online workspace will need to be more than a repository for completed and ongoing efforts. Since it will be the most accessible and, consequently, most used medium, the virtual environment will be critical to establishing and strengthening intra-cohort

relationships.

The fact that time will be limited does not mean that in-person collaboration will be impossible. During the applicant interviews, each Ambassador was informed that they would be required to attend at least two, two-hour in-person meetings at RIDE, most likely in the evening. Initially, the intent of these meetings was to provide opportunities to reconnect as a cohort and to calibrate and coordinate ongoing and future efforts. While important, these activities lack the depth necessary for relationship building. Instead, the time could be spent on coproduction similar to that online, but involving either the entire group or subsets. The latter would allow for intra-cohort mentorship. I know that the most veteran member of the group and the least experienced share an interest, if not passion, for special education. This seems like a natural pairing, one that could encourage an exchange of knowledge while strengthening a relationship.

The cohort could also benefit from in-person collaboration that is not within its confines. The Ambassador application communicates the expectation that cohort members will "champion and promote career education beyond the PrepareRI Ambassador experience." However, this need not be construed as *after* contracts expire. During their tenure, the Ambassadors could facilitate experiences at their respective sites. Data generated during these experiences could be compared and considered and serve as the basis for continued collaboration, within the cohort and "beyond."

Nurture Existing Relationships

My work did result in relationships, but they were very focused and served to generate data, not encourage collaboration. These existing relationships would be natural entry points to continue conversations and initiate collaboration. A way to do so would be

to recast the 30 or so educators I interviewed as an advisory board. This board would have access to the cohort, its work, and to other advisors, either in-person or through the virtual environment. Recasting respondents as advisors would communicate their value to the overall process of improving career education systems, could increase their buy-in for additional support, and increase access to the systems of which they are a part. Once established, the advisory board's continued involvement and collaboration could be solicited in piloting Ambassador-created resources and toolkits. This would serve the practical purpose of vetting these materials while initiating an iterative process for their continued improvement. The consequence of this approach would be quality products coproduced by the cohort and the board.

Ambassadors could also strengthen the relationships I initiated by implementing the suggestions made in "Analysis" above. Specifically, the original respondents (now the advisory board) could be asked to make further strategic introductions, this time either laterally or to their affinity groups. While conducting interviews, I was introduced to two informal groups who met out of necessity, not requirement. One group was comprised of principals who came together to discuss how to improve CTE in their region's comprehensive high schools and the equitable disbursal of Perkins funds. Another group consisted of assistant superintendents that had concerns similar to those of the principals' group regarding CTE. I participated in one of the latter group's meetings too late in the process for it to become a consistent practice but immediately realized the potential for yet more collaboration.

What would allow Ambassadors to both revisit the relationships I initiated and engage stakeholders anew would be various forms of the authority. The cohort would, as

I did, represent RIDE when engaging the field (this time, more than just educators) and would therefore share the department's authority. The Ambassadors are also named in a statewide initiative, PrepareRI, and so are empowered to act on the state's behalf when conducting research and collaborating with others to coproduce the resources and toolkits necessary for improved career preparation systems. And some of the Ambassadors are either respected veteran educators, district-level administrators, or both and therefore enjoy personal and positional authority. All of this authority can be leveraged to gain access to stakeholders and systems as the cohort endeavors to realize the work with which it was charged.

Address Statewide Need by Heeding Context

In their application materials and during their interviews, each eventual Ambassador displayed either a deep knowledge of CTE and career education, a clear vision for how career preparation systems could be improved, or both. Some have been educators for decades and others only recently started their teaching careers. Regardless, each is passionate, dedicated, and determined, committed to the vision found in the *Action Plan*. A question remains however: How will a cohort of six PrepareRI Ambassadors create resources and toolkits that improve career education and increase career readiness for *all* of Rhode Island's students? The answer, I believe, lies in addressing the unique needs of schools, districts, and communities, i.e., by heeding context, something best accomplished through increased collaboration.

The family median income map contained herein color-codes municipalities accordingly and reveals juxtapositions of wealth and poverty. Observations confirmed that the needs of a wealthy, predominantly white community like Barrington are different

than those in the urban communities of Providence and Pawtucket. Interviews confirmed the assertions, found in the *Action Plan*, that access to quality CTE programs varies throughout the state. To get a better sense of statewide need before creating resources for statewide consumption, Ambassadors should endeavor to better understand the various contexts that will affect and be affected by their work. In a repurposing of the town-hall style meetings held to socialize the state's new secondary regulations, the cohort could hold regional events that would socialize the PrepareRI initiative and the *Action Plan* while soliciting input from and establishing the expectations of students, their families, the larger community, and even educators. Because the focus of PrepareRI is not purely academic, employers from the regions would also be invited to participate, expanding the definition of "field." Ambassadors could facilitate activities that would see all stakeholders collaborate to assess the economic health and employment potential of the region and suggest how career education could improve that health and realize that potential. It could be that, because of these meetings, it is discovered that there are not only differential needs requiring differential treatment, but opportunities exist that would have remained obscured. Through regional collaboration, Ambassadors could extend their reach to better determined what is truly needed from and actually possible for a statewide effort to improve career preparation systems. The Ambassadors determinations could form the bases of immediate action (such as the development of the resources and toolkits that were originally envisioned) and of recommendations for further and greater action by RIDE (such as the reconfiguring of CTE funding structures and the improvement of its CTE evaluation system).

Activating Other Agencies

The above recommendations rely on collaboration, collaboration that sees PrepareRI Ambassadors and the field endeavor to align career preparation systems with community and industry needs. This collaboration is still focused mainly on education, however, and therefore, as envisioned, calls upon RIDE disproportionately when compared to other state agencies and organizations. It should be remembered that RIDE is only one of 10 agencies and organizations charged with operationalizing the PrepareRI *Action Plan* and that "Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI) is a commitment by the State of Rhode Island to improve the career readiness and postsecondary attainment of all Rhode Island youth to prepare them with the skills they need for jobs that pay." To increase the scale and impact of the overall effort, the roles of RIDE and the Ambassadors should be expanded, with collaboration happening laterally. This lateral collaboration would include partners such as the Governor's office, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the CTEBOT, as well as the Department of Labor and Training and Commerce. Such collaboration would activate an intentional K-14 endeavor that would enjoy conspicuous endorsement by the state, would be informed in real-time by labor market information, and would lead to the readiness and educational attainment to fill "jobs that pay."

Improve Through Collaboration

Through collaboration, the relationships within the cohort will be established and strengthened, improving the cohesion of a group united in purpose. Through collaboration, relationships with the field will be improved, resulting in the coproduction of quality resources and toolkits that will improve career education. Through collaboration, Ambassadors will increase their reach, improving their understanding of

what communities need and activating other agencies and organizations to better align education and employability. And through collaboration, Rhode Island's career preparation systems will be improved for the benefit of all youth and the entire state.

Implications for Sector

Weiss and McGuinn (2016), in considering the decrease in federal influence on education under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), assert that while "[t]here is no universally correct set of roles for the state education agency (SEA) …, with … increased state power comes the responsibility to improve educational outcomes for every student in the state" (pp. 28 – 29). Two areas of education they identify in which the SEA must play a leading role are "articulating the state's educational vision and goals" and "communicating about critical educational issues with stakeholders across the state" (Weiss & McGuinn, 2016, p. 30). RIDE seems poised to do just this in the area of career education. The *Action Plan* clearly articulates those steps necessary to improve the state's career preparation systems, improvements that will see the alignment of career education with industry need to create high-quality pathways leading to high-skill, high-demand jobs.

The issue of improving career education in Rhode Island is not one of vision but of capacity. As Burnette II (2016) observes, "With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act, state departments of education are set to take on a bigger role in key areas – and many will do so after having laid off employees in recent years" (sidebar, para. 1). At RIDE, downsizing has resulted in many workstreams being led by a single person. The work is limited to that person's capacity and requires a strategic use of that capacity for maximum effect. My work in assembling the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort affirms

that a single person can develop and implement all aspects of a process that delivers a product for public benefit. However, I could have concentrated my energy on enlisting and engaging others in the creation of that public good, that is, I could have focused on encouraging collaboration instead of solely on production. Had I done so – had I collaborated – I would have: multiplied my capacity manyfold; increased the quality of the product through the direct input of others; and initiated and strengthened relationships through the coproduction of a public good. This seems particularly pertinent at a time when the sector is being asked to do much more with much less.

I admit that a cohort of six Ambassadors might not seem like "much more," especially when tasked with improving the career preparation systems of an entire state. This is where *who* the Ambassadors are becomes a factor. As mentioned earlier, Chief Osborn shared that the philosophy of the department was one of empowerment, a philosophy that called for "letting those closest to the work do the work." The Ambassadors are practicing educators with proven track records of system leadership and/or success in CTE. As such, they are close to the work and are of the field. It is not hard to imagine that the cohort's efforts will be perceived as collegial by the field when compared to the efforts of the department, which might be viewed as legislative, and will therefore be more readily received. The Ambassadors, then, represent an intentional move by RIDE to include educator voice in a statewide initiative – i.e., collaboration between the field and the state – in order to increase that initiative's resonance with, applicability to, and acceptance by the field. Other SEAs should consider including a "for the field, by the field" component in their work.

In thinking about all of the work that I either did or observed while at RIDE, I am

left to wonder how the nature of the task and the realities of context impact the potential for and degree of collaboration. Recalling Brown et al., there is a set of responsibilities that the SEA is obliged to carry out with fidelity; not all of these responsibilities lend themselves to collaboration. For instance, as the sole charter authorizer, the state is bounded by statute and policy and expected to account for its decisions to grant or deny new charters and charter amendments. Internal collaboration within the department might improve the efficiency of this process, but external involvement might be limited to increasing the transparency of the department's actions. Enrichment efforts like the Advanced Coursework Network and Dual Enrollment seem to enjoy near-universal approval (but are restricted by things like budget and transportation), requiring management and coordination more than collaboration for their continued existence. It would seem, then, that endeavors not wholly owned by the SEA and that require the will of others to be successful would best lend themselves to collaboration and coproduction. The PrepareRI initiative is well-meaning in its vision to improve career preparation systems and consequent economic health of the state. But the implementation of those improved systems rests with the field and impacts students, families, and entire communities. For both the successful realization of this vision and its subsequent implementation, collaboration seems not only natural, but necessary.

Conclusion

My strategic project called for me to assemble a cohort of education leaders – PrepareRI Ambassadors – to first analyze Rhode Island's career preparation systems and then make recommendations and develop resources that would see improvement in those systems. The project was also to serve as the pilot for a process by which relationships

between the Rhode Island Department of Education and the field could be improved. The work would be guided and shaped by input solicited from those within RIDE and in the field. Effectively engaging the field required me to consider the context within which I would be working, including the existing relationships with RIDE. The project was seen to completion, but was not entirely successful.

The assembling of the PrepareRI Ambassador cohort was the culmination of a eight-month process. Data collected through research and through interviews with RIDE personnel and educators in the field informed the creation of an Ambassador application and selection process. Six PrepareRI Ambassadors were named on April 25, 2017, realizing the primary purpose of the project.

The secondary purpose for the project, per the request of Chief for Innovation Stephen Osborn, was to create a process that strengthens relationships between RIDE and the field. This secondary purpose did not come to fruition. While those in the field were critical to the primary purpose, their involvement was restricted to little more than providing input. Ongoing conversations with the field did develop relationships, but the depth of those relationships was shallow at best and their strength, unproven.

Analysis of the evidence and reflection upon that evidence suggest that *both* the primary goal of assembling the cohort and the secondary goal of creating a relationship-strengthening process would have been achieved through an intentional effort to collaborate with those in the field. The singular focus on the intended cohort relegated respondents (i.e., interviewees) to the roles of contributors and consultants. Had they been involved in the coproduction of the process that realized the Ambassador cohort, new relationships with some in the field would have been initiated while existing

relationships with others would have been strengthened. Collaboration and coproduction, then, would have led to the realization of both of the project's purposes.

The work of the PrepareRI Ambassadors offers new opportunities for collaboration and coproduction. This collaboration would first be seen within the cohort, necessary to improve cohesion and establish direction for the group's efforts. The group could then turn to the same educators that informed the Ambassador application and selection process and involve them in the coproduction of career education resources and toolkits, deepening and strengthening existing relationships through collaboration. To increase capacity and better understand what is needed to improve statewide career preparation systems, the cohort could conduct and facilitate regional meetings of the stakeholders that would be affected by their efforts. To increase reach and impact for a truly statewide commitment, the cohort could also activate other agencies and organizations to better align education and industry. By collaborating with stakeholders, Ambassadors would better understand the various realities of the state's context and would be better equipped to (co)produce something of extensive public value. Like other SEAs, RIDE is impacted by the need to deliver on state and federal requirements and expectations, at times, with limited capacity. This means that existing capacity must be focused in ways that achieve maximum return on effort invested; collaboration and coproduction will maximize that capacity while strengthening relationships. The RIDE-led PrepareRI Ambassador effort provides a statewide opportunity to collaborate on and coproduce improved career preparation systems, realizing a public good that will: benefit students, families, and their communities; initiate and strengthen relationships; and serve as an exemplar for the nation's education sector.

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Appendix A: Objective 2, Goal 4 of the Three-Year Action Plan

Goal 4: Provide all educators (traditional and CTE) with supports, professional development and leadership opportunities that enable them to gain expertise in high-wage, high-demand fields and strengthen their instructional practices in career pathways.		
Action Steps (NSFY Criteria)	Owner (s)	Timeline
1. Hold quarterly PrepareRI Summits to develop communities of practice that will be focused on building capacity to support a high-quality system of career education. The summits will provide information, resources, tools and targeted professional development in high value areas. The sessions will be designed to support core subject area teachers, CTE teachers, school counselors and school and district leaders. RIDE will work with employers, educators, non-profit and civic organizations and other partners to lead these sessions.	PrepareRI Project Director	April 2017 – December, 2019
2. Establish an educator fellowship program – PrepareRI Ambassadors – who will be teacher-leaders passionate about expanding career education in their schools and districts who will lead professional development, as a part of the PrepareRI Summits, and will develop and inform policy recommendations to support the expansion of expansion of career education efforts. PrepareRI Ambassadors will be chosen through a rigorous application process and receive a stipend for part-time work. The program will be modeled after the Career Readiness Fellows Program funded by Phase One of the grant, see Appendix G Career Readiness Fellows Profiles.	Steve Osborn, Chief of Innovation, RIDE	June 2017 – September 2017
3. By the 2019/2020 school year every school will have at least one educator who engages in PrepareRI professional development. These opportunities will be evaluated for relevancy and program strength by employers and PrepareRI Ambassadors, and will blend core academic and CTE. There will be a menu of opportunities available for educators including teacher externships, NMSI's Laying the Foundation Program, Project Lead the Way, and the US Department of Education's CTE Leadership Academy, among others. See Appendix H Proposed PrepareRI Educator Learning Menu of Options	PrepareRI Project Director	December 2016 – September 2019
4. Revise and update CTE Teacher Certification requirements to support the recruitment of mid-career professionals, including professionals without a bachelor's degree. See Appendix I Proposed Certification Revisions.	Barbara Cottam, BOE Chair	November 2016 - March 2017
5. Establish an alternative teacher education program, modeled after the SREB "Preparing CTE Teachers for Today's Students Program" that will provide industry professionals with sought-after technical knowledge and experience high quality professional development and in-school support. This will begin by releasing an RFP in November 2016 and awarding the RFP by March, 2017. See Appendix J Proposed Alternative Preparation Program RFP. *Action Steps 3-5 were developed by Rhode Island's Career Readiness Fellow Dan Angell. See Appendix K Dan Angell Career Readiness Fellow Capstone.	Jim Purcell, Postsecondary Commissioner Steve Osborn, Chief of Innovation, RIDE	November 2016 - July 2017
6. Establish a financial incentive program for the recruitment of new career education teachers directly from industry and that incentivizes all teachers (core academic and CTE) to earn postsecondary credits and certificates in high-skill, high-demand fields. The CTE Trust will lean on best practices in corporate recruitment for the initiative.	Al Lubrano, CTEBOT	November 2016 - September 2018

Appendix B: PrepareRI Ambassador Onboarding Plan

PREPARE
Rhode Island

Career Pathways: Anchored in Career Education

Onboarding and Activating **PrepareRI Ambassadors**: *Project Plan and Timeline*

Overview

This document serves as guidance for the onboarding of a cohort of educator leaders to be known as "PrepareRI Ambassadors." It includes:

- an introduction to the context within which the need for PrepareRI Ambassadors was determined.
- a definition of "PrepareRI Ambassador" and a description of the work in which Ambassadors will engage.
- a description of the curriculum that PrepareRI ambassadors will follow.

Introduction

In March 2016, Rhode Island was one of 24 states to receive a $100,000 award as part of the Council of Chief State School Officers' New Skills for Youth (NSFY) grant opportunity. Governor Gina M. Raimondo noted:

> *We are pleased and grateful to receive the New Skills for Youth planning grant, which will help us focus and advance our efforts toward aligning our career-and-technical system with the most rapidly growing fields in the Rhode Island economy. This work will benefit Rhode Island students, families, and the business and industry community*.[3]

The award was used for the development of a plan for K-12 and postsecondary career education that aligns with industry need and demand and will result in high-skill, high-wage jobs. *PrepareRI: A Unified Action Plan for Career Readiness* (known as "the Action Plan," to be implemented over the next three years) was incorporated into the NSFY Phase Two grant proposal, which was submitted October 2016. In January 2017, it was revealed that Rhode Island was one of ten states that were awarded the Phase Two grant and that it will receive nearly $2 million over the next three years to implement the state's plan for career education. While winning a Phase Two grant both advertises the need for and funds the realization of aligned and effective career-readiness pathways, Governor Raimondo has already shared her support for and commitment to the goals and aspirations contained within the Action Plan.

The writing of the NSFY Phase Two grant proposal did a number of things, all of which focused on the development of a realistic approach to career education throughout Rhode Island:

1. **Promoted cross-sector collaboration.** Seven state agencies and departments, various employers and their representative associations, and numerous K-12 and postsecondary educators convened in a series of meetings held from June to September 2016. This collaborative, the Career Readiness Working Group, worked diligently to identify the current state of career education in Rhode

[3] "RIDE wins $100K grant to develop career-readiness plan," Providence Business News, http://pbn.com/RIDE-wins-100K-grant-to-develop-career-readiness-plan,113325?print=1, (April 5, 2016)

Island and to name goals that would result in students being career ready for jobs in high-skill, high-demand sectors. The Working Group's efforts are reflected in the Action Plan.

2. **Identified areas of need and of potential.** Studies conducted by Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the Brookings Institute provided the data that serve as the basis for the goals found in the Action Plan. According to a statewide needs assessment conducted by JFF in September 2016, of the largest industries in Rhode Island, only government and manufacturing "offer average wages sufficient to support a family [i.e., pay a living wage]." The other large industries – health care, retail trade, and accommodation and food services – have average wages that, as measured by MIT's Living Wage Calculator, keep families in poverty. Six of the top 10 financial services occupations pay living wages, but five of those require a bachelor's degree. Of the 15 information technology jobs that pay living wages, 13 require a bachelor's degree (and the other two require an associate's degree). Based on this sample of careers, it would seem that education is key to gaining access to the best-paying jobs.

   In Rhode Island Innovates, the Brookings Institute identified seven industry clusters as the leading and potential economic drivers in the state: (1) biomedical innovation and healthcare; (2) information technology/software (including cybersecurity and data analytics); (3) defense shipbuilding and maritime; (4) advanced business services; (5) design, food, and custom manufacturing; (6) transportation, distribution and logistics; and (7) arts, education, hospitality, and tourism. While meeting the employer needs and demands of these industry clusters will not necessarily result in the career education envisioned in the Action Plan, identifying the clusters at least establishes parameters for the realization of a prepared workforce.

3. **Created a three-year Action Plan that cements Rhode Island's commitment to career readiness.** The Action Plan names the goals for a strategic approach to career readiness, the actors involved in that approach, and the activities that will result in a career-ready Rhode Island. In sum, the plan calls for students to be prepared with the skills and mindsets to fill positions in the state's high-wage, high-demand industry sectors. Germane to this guidance document, the Action Plan names PrepareRI Ambassadors as being key to the realization of career education and consequent pathways to high-skill, high-demand jobs.

Defining "PrepareRI Ambassador"

"Overarching Objective 2, Goal 4" of the Action Plan calls for "provid(ing) all educators (traditional and CTE) with supports, professional development, and leadership opportunities that enable them to gain expertise in high-wage, high-demand fields and strengthen their instructional practices in career pathways." Per the plan, the goal is to:

Establish an educator fellowship program – PrepareRI Ambassadors – who will be teacher leaders passionate about expanding career education in their schools and districts who will lead professional development, as a part of the PrepareRI Summits, and will develop and inform policy recommendations to support the expansion of career education efforts.

Annually, applications will be solicited for up to 20 Prepare RI Ambassadors. The Ambassadors will be enlisted from throughout the education sector, including: K-12 general education teachers; career and technical education teachers; K-12 school counselors; a principal from a comprehensive high school; a superintendent from a comprehensive school district; postsecondary educators; and parents of current K-12 students. The first cohort of Prepare RI Ambassadors will be named in April 2017.

PrepareRI Ambassador Job Description

Being a PrepareRI Ambassador is a part-time commitment, allowing teachers to remain in the classroom while influencing state-level policy decisions and developing tools to support peers. Each Ambassador will earn a $5,000 stipend over the 12-month school year (July 1 through June 30).[4]

PrepareRI Ambassadors will be expected to participate in a number of activities. These include:

- **Writing a research-based capstone**. The capstone is the distinguishing feature of the PrepareRI Ambassador program. Each Ambassador[5] is expected to write a 15- to 20-page capstone (excluding references and appendices) that is informed by peer-reviewed literature, available data, and professional experience. The capstone will serve a number of purposes:
    - It will answer specific, career education-related problems of practice.
    - It will serve as the basis for policy solutions and tools for career educators across Rhode Island.
    - It will provide all educators with a template for the high school senior capstone graduation requirement.

  Capstones will be due at the end of the Ambassadors' contracts and will be required for any outstanding remuneration. While each Ambassador will be credited with all work and original authorship, the final product will become property of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE).

- **Participating in and contributing to Ambassador-specific check-ins at RIDE.** Checking in regularly with the PrepareRI Project Director (to be named) and with

[4] The tenure of the inaugural cohort will be 15 months, from April 2017 through the end of June 2018.
[5] PrepareRI Ambassadors may also be asked to focus on technical work (creating and curating meetings and their content, developing and maintaining a web-based presence, etc.) or to develop career education toolkits for use in the field.

each other at RIDE will provide Ambassadors with practical and collegial experiences. On the practical side, Ambassadors will receive initial training, will develop the topics of their capstones, and will receive ongoing technical and academic support for the writing of the capstones. On the collegial side, check-ins will provide a forum within which Ambassadors will inform one another's pursuits, will offer peer-provided direction and support, and will practice the leadership skills expected of the position. Together, check-ins will be an integral part of a successful and rewarding experience for each Ambassador.

- **Developing the content for, attending, and assisting in the facilitation of all PrepareRI Summits and meetings leading to those Summits.** Quarterly, educator leaders from all schools throughout Rhode Island will convene for professional development sessions with high-wage, high-demand employers that will give real, actionable steps to improve career education practices. Employers and organizations such as Junior Achievement, Year Up, and others will lead breakout sessions, all focused on career education. Summits will also provide opportunities for networking and systems building.

  The inaugural PrepareRI Summit will be held June 10, 2017. In anticipation of that Summit, a series of regional meetings will be held. Regional meetings will allow stakeholders to be introduced to the goals and aspirations found in the three-year Action Plan, to meet and interact with PrepareRI Ambassadors, and to contribute information and perspectives that will inform all efforts to improve career education throughout the state.

- **Championing and promoting career education beyond the PrepareRI Ambassador experience.** Without doubt, those chosen to be PrepareRI Ambassadors will be passionate and energetic individuals who believe deeply in the value of career education and see themselves as part of the effort to develop and promote that education in the classrooms and communities throughout Rhode Island. Being a PrepareRI Ambassador means being a member of a cohort of professionals who have the skills to identify and to help resolve real problems of practice that affect the entire state. And completing a PrepareRI Ambassadorship means becoming a skilled and informed leader, one who will continue to champion career education as a pathway to a stronger, better Rhode Island.

The PrepareRI Ambassador Curriculum

An experience founded upon nationally recognized teacher leader standards. In 2008, educators from across the nation convened as the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium to discuss and develop standards for teacher leadership. These standards

were compiled and formalized into the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*[6,7], which not only defines the standards, but also groups them according to one of seven domains and provides and defines activities for their realization. PrepareRI Ambassadors will be trained in accordance with the expectations of these teacher leader standards. While these standards will certainly formalize the Ambassadorship, the intent is to create a professional experience that surfaces and further develops each individual's skills as an inquisitive, collaborative leader.

Answering real problems of practice that impact career education in Rhode Island. Per the New Skills for Youth grant competition guidelines[8], funds will be awarded to "support cross-sector state teams that clearly demonstrate the commitment and capacity to accomplish several key objectives that are essential to reaching the overarching goals." In total, there are six key objectives:

1. Demand-driven and employer-led processes
2. Rigor and quality in career pathways for *all*
3. Career-focused accountability systems
4. Scaled pathways that culminate in credentials
5. *Aligned state and federal funding streams*
6. Ensured cross-institutional alignment

Of the six, all but the fifth key objective, "aligned state and federal funding streams," would make for ideal topics for PrepareRI Ambassadors' problems of practice.

Appendix A captures the key objectives identified by the Career Readiness Working. Each of the key objectives is further broken down into targeted outcomes. In the Action Plan, each of the outcomes is rated on a four-point scale, with "1" indicating that, currently, "there is very little activity and no significant effort to address this outcome" and "4" indicating that "the state has fully met this outcome." All of the outcomes for the five key objectives – 13 in total – are rated either "1" or "2," suggesting that career education in Rhode Island is far from being realized.

The highlighted areas in Appendix A represent both areas of need and possible topics for PrepareRI Ambassadors' problems of practice. However, with over 50 areas of need, it would be unrealistic for only the Ambassadors to address, let alone resolve, all of those needs. Instead, it is hoped that, through their efforts and capstones, Ambassadors provide insight into how to create an articulated yet aligned approach to realizing career education throughout Rhode Island, an approach that results in career pathways that lead to high-skill, high-demand – and high-paying – jobs for all.

Using Design Thinking to guide thinking and writing. Design Thinking has been used to great effect in the development and implementation of other teacher leader efforts in

[6] http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org/downloads/TLS_Brochure_sm.pdf
[7] http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org/
[8] http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/NSFYStateGrantGuidelinesFINAL.pdf

Rhode Island.[9] Design Thinking is the practice of putting people and their experiences at the center of our design efforts. It enables us to understand how people relate to and experience the world around them, and with this understanding, we can anticipate what people need and desire. The attached overview (see Appendix B) provides insight into how to: use a strong narrative as part of a transformation effort; hone in on and identify the root cause(s) of a challenge; and understand how others might perceive the challenge. Design Thinking, then, provides PrepareRI Ambassadors a template for thinking and writing about their problems of practice.

Timeline for the PrepareRI Ambassador Onboarding and Activities

Following is a timeline for onboarding PrepareRI Ambassadors, for the activities in which they will participate, and for commensurate efforts that will be undertaken to ensure that the onboarding is effective and the activities are successful and sustained.

A brief overview of the next four years:

- ***School year 2016-17: Activating and Planning***
  - The balance of the 2016-17 school year will be used to activate key personnel, including PrepareRI Ambassadors (see Appendix C for the PrepareRI Ambassador application), to plan for the ensuing years
  - The Ambassadors' efforts will inform this year's activities
  - The focus will be on creating urgency around the need for career education while communicating a clear, actionable, long-term goal
- ***School year 2017-18: Developing and Deploying***
  - Summer of 2017 will see professional development opportunities for site-based teacher leaders, facilitate by Ambassadors and led by experts in the area of career education (such as the National Math and Science Initiative and Project Lead the Way)
  - The focus will be on developing people and programs in line with the expectations found in the Action Plan. These people and programs will then be deployed across the state (see Appendix D for proposed regions).
- ***School year 2018-19: Implementing in Earnest***
  - Summer of 2018 will see the onboarding of a new cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors and the offering of more professional development opportunities
  - The focus will be on implementing with fidelity the programs that were developed over the previous year
- ***School year 2019-20: Measuring and Calibrating***
  - As before, a new cohort of Ambassadors will be onboarded and more professional development opportunities will be offered

[9] This section is adapted from "RI Career Readiness Fellowship: Design Thinking Overview," compiled by Kirtley Fisher of the Business Innovation Factory. For more information on design thinking, please visit www.td4ed.com.

- The programs that were developed and implemented over the previous years will be measured for efficacy and fidelity with respect to the goals of the Action Plan
- The focus will be on ascertaining the degree of impact of the newly-implemented programs, both qualitatively (for example, the degree to which career education is valued throughout Rhode Island) and quantitatively (for example, the number of students on career pathways in high-skill, high-demand sectors). Programs will then be calibrated in accordance with the needs of students and the goals of the state, either continuing intact, continuing with revision, or discontinued altogether.

Appendix A: Areas of Need in Career Education

Key Objective 1: Employer Engagement

Targeted outcome 1a: Identifying high-skill, high-demand sectors

Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

The State has used reliable LMI and other information to identify specific industry clusters that are high-skill, high-demand in the current economy and there has been a focus on prioritizing these sectors for adult and youth workforce development. While the State has formalized statewide structures in statute that should be regularly convening the K-12, postsecondary, employer and workforce development communities, more needs to be done to use these structures to act upon the information the State has to establish priorities for career pathways, particularly beyond traditional CTE.

Early in Governor Raimondo's tenure, in partnership with Rhode Island's business community, she commissioned a Brookings Institution study, Rhode Island Innovates, to provide a detailed and action-oriented analysis of the State's opportunities for economic growth. The study identified seven industry clusters as the leading and potential economic drivers in the state: (1) Biomedical Innovation and Healthcare, (2) Information Technology/Software (including cybersecurity and data analytics), (3) Defense Shipbuilding and Maritime, (4) Advanced Business Services, (5) Design, Food, and Custom Manufacturing, (6) Transportation, distribution and logistics, and (7) Arts, education, hospitality, and tourism. Using this study, the State officially identified these high-skill, high-demand sectors in its approved 2016 WIOA Plan and have made these sectors statewide priorities. In addition to informing the State's WIOA plan, the State has implemented a number of workforce development programs targeted towards meeting the needs of employers in these sectors, including some focused specifically on preparing youth to have the skills needed to secure jobs with these employers, including the formation of Real Jobs Rhode Island industry partnerships (discussed below), Computer Science for Rhode Island and three P-TECH programs in these fields.

Additionally, in 2014, the Rhode Island General Assembly created the Career and Technical Education Board of Trustees (CTEBOT) and Trust with the intention of strengthening career and technical education in the State. Appointed by the Governor, the CTEBOT is led by Al Lubrano, a retired CEO of an advanced manufacturing company, and Lisa Bisaccia, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for CVS Health. The majority of the members of the CTEBOT come from industry, but also include representatives of K-12, postsecondary and other stakeholders and has several representatives that also work with the business-led Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC). The group functions to provide oversight and quality control to high school CTE programs. The CTEBOT is currently undertaking an employer-led process to update and align all RIDE-recognized CTE program standards to industry needs.

While much good work has happened under the leadership of the new administration,

too much has occurred in an ad hoc fashion. The State needs to do more to take advantage of existing structures to identify statewide priorities for career pathways beyond CTE. Moreover, more must be done to prioritize career pathways aligned to high-skill, high-demand sectors. This lack of prioritization has real programmatic impacts. 42% of students enrolled in CTE are not enrolled in programs aligned to high-skill, high-demand sectors, and nearly 50% of work-based learning experiences offered through the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) are not in high-skill, high-demand sectors.

State law currently assigns responsibility for career pathways beyond CTE to the GWB. RIGL 42-102-10 states that the GWB "shall support and oversee statewide efforts to develop and expand career pathways" with the help of an advisory committee of stakeholders and employers, the Career Pathways Advisory Committee (CPAC). Neither the CPAC, nor the GWB, have created an effective process to convene stakeholders to review LMI data and set priorities for career pathways work. However, new leadership transitions, including the installation of a new GWB Chair, Michael Grey, VP of Operations for Sedexo, and a new Executive Director, Heather Hudson, formerly an education policy advisor to the Governor, demonstrate new potential for this group to serve as the structure to lead this work going forward. If the GWB can formalize this process, its statutory authority should help the process sustain across leadership transitions. Due to its small size there is not a need for the state to identify a process for regional differentiation based on local economic needs.

Targeted outcome 1b: Aligning skills and competencies with the labor market

Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

Employers lead a process in specific industries in the state through which they identify the academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills needed for adult workers, but this process has not been translated broadly for students. As a result, the vast majority of K-12 and postsecondary students are not accessing career pathways informed by employers or connected to high-skill, high-demand sectors.

The CTEBOT has led a process for high-skill, high-demand industry sectors to identify standards for CTE programs to ensure that their completers have the academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills necessary to enter the workforce upon graduation. However, only about a quarter of youth statewide are enrolled in CTE programs. Employers have indicated a need to train more students from the general high school population, not just CTE programs. The CTEBOT has been frustrated by the limits of embedding pathways in all secondary schools, considering their statutory reach is singularly focused on the CTE population.

In addition, there has been limited to no progress in aligning skills and competencies established in postsecondary education with the labor market. In interviews with JFF, employers frequently stated that post-secondary institutions are not teaching the

technical and work ready skills valued in the work place. Mapping backward from employer needs to the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) associate's degrees appears to be limited, and, interviewees described their efforts in the past to reach out to CCRI as landing in a "black hole" after an initial conversation. It is unclear the degree to which CCRI is positioned to tailor and quickly stand up new programs of study in response to employer need.

Finally, employers cited several barriers that prevent them from more actively engaging with schools and colleges. Local employers often complain about the cost and time it takes to onboard youth apprentices or interns. When interested in taking youth on site, employers identified regulatory barriers that prevent youth from being in workplaces. Employers also pointed out that Rhode Island, unlike other states, does not have a clear and easy-to-follow guide on best practices with school and student engagement, and that the current system has too many points of entry, which can be overwhelming, particularly for small businesses.

Fortunately, Rhode Island has a sector-by-sector employer-led, demand-driven workforce development model -- Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI). This initiative, now in its second year, is collaborative, flexible and business-led. Each sector, including all of the high-skill, high-demand sectors outlined above, has already formed an industry partnership made up of multiple employers, workforce intermediaries, and education and training providers. Together, the partnerships have articulated the specific knowledge, skills, and experiences needed for priority jobs in their industry, and working with their partner education and training providers, have designed and launched specific pathways (including apprenticeships, training courses, internships, etc.) for unemployed and underemployed adults to enter the industry and gain employment. GWB and DLT staff regularly evaluate outcomes and have reached agreed-upon performance measures with each partnership. Rhode Island's employer community has heralded this program as Rhode Island "finally" having a process that allows them to have the talent they need to compete and grow while providing targeted education and skills training for Rhode Islanders. What has not been done is more intentionally connect K-12 and higher education into this initiative (although some partnerships do presently include a higher education partner, only one includes K-12 partners).

One early example of where this has worked is the RJRI partnership led by Electric Boat (EB). There, EB has connected their partnership to 8 CTE programs across the state, who are working with EB to design career pathway programs into entry-level jobs with EB, where students will learn the trades that EB has identified as their highest need, participate in postsecondary training opportunities offered by CCRI and New England Institute of Technology, and participate in EB's summer internship program. More information on their training model is available here. Rhode Island should seek to replicate this model across all of its RJRI partnerships.

JFF interviewed a number of individuals affiliated with RJRI partnerships. These

individuals were excited about the possibility of using what they have already done to identify required skill sets to design education opportunities to backwards map to achieve vertical alignment from employer needs through postsecondary and high school programs. If all RJRI partnerships were scaled down to the K-12 system, Real Jobs could serve as the employer-led process to align K-12 skills and competencies with the labor market.

In addition, while the employer community has been disappointed by previous outreach to the postsecondary system and particularly at CCRI, new leadership at CCRI has laid a foundation for potential change. CCRI has a new President, Meghan Hughes, who has made reform of the college's Center for Workforce and Community Education (CWCE) to better meet the needs of the employer community a priority. Additionally, Tom Sabbagh from CCRI Academic Affairs manages the state's federal TAACCCT grant. He joined the state's New Skills for Youth Core Team and is using TAACCT funds to support the development of stronger workforce practices at the college. With just three public institutions in the state, innovative practices that are connecting with employers and working at the community college could quickly be scaled to the two other postsecondary institutions, Rhode Island College and University of Rhode Island.

Finally, there are currently several opportunities the State could take to reduce barriers and create incentives for employers to engage with schools. One example that could be retooled is the existing RI Employers' Apprenticeship Tax Credit, which is currently narrowly-targeted to machine tool, metal trade and plastic process technician apprenticeships. The credit has been on the books since 1996 but has had no filers take advantage since 2010. The DLT regularly has a process for reviewing regulations and should focus its next review on barriers to work-based learning opportunities. The State has also recently undertaken several initiatives to better present and compile information to the public across agencies, and should seek to use that lesson to improve the availability of information for employers.

Targeted Outcome 1c: Dynamic review process

Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

While the State has undergone a process that included the business community to identify high-skill, high-demand sectors, it does not have a cross-sector process in place where that information is continually assessed or adjusted.

The State needs to do more to take advantage of existing structures to establish a process to adjust classification systems for industries as the labor market changes. State law current assigns overall responsibility for career pathways to the GWB. While the GWB statute contemplates a Career Pathways Advisory Committee (CPAC), the committee has not been actively involved in workforce development policy in several years. The programs that do exist are not all rigorous or aligned with postsecondary programs. Numerous employers and other stakeholders interviewed consistently stated

that existing programs were not well aligned to their needs, nor were schools creating the more rigorous programs needed to help young people understand and prepare for careers in such sectors as health care, IT, financial services, and advanced manufacturing. The CPAC of the GWB could be (and statutorily is) the place where a feedback loop should be created to review the impact of career pathways to inform their continuous improvement. To be effective, this committee will need a significant overhaul so that it is better positioned to continually assess labor market needs, adopt new policies to improve the implementation of career pathways, and review and publicize data on career pathway participant progress overall. The GWB must utilize its significant workforce development funding streams for youth to its advantage in taking authority to set priorities for career pathways.

RIDE has begun a quality assurance process for approving CTE programs at the CTEBOT. Through this process, employer engagement in program review is required. While the list of approved programs currently includes an excess of those not aligned to high-skill, high-demand sectors (e.g., cosmetology and automotive programs), as of July 1, 2017, pursuant to a new policy adopted by the CTEBOT and Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, state funds will no longer be used to support programs that do not align to the employer-designed standards and do not align to high-skill, high-demand pathways.

Key Objective 2: Rigor and Quality in Career Pathways for ALL Students

Targeted outcome 2a: Quality and Rigor in Pathways

Current Status: 1/Limited Progress

Rhode Island has begun to establish a quality assurance review process with employers for CTE programs that leverages program approval criteria to establish and maintain program quality. At present, however, not all CTE programs are aligned to the employer-designed standards. Moreover, there are presently little options outside of CTE for students to access flexible career pathways that include career awareness and exposure or occupationally-specific courses.

The new CTE quality assurance process and employer-led CTE standard development is designed to ensure that students who complete these programs meet employers' basic requirements for entry level positions. Already, several programs have closed or adjusted practice in response to the new policies. The CTEBOT will complete this work for every sector by July 2017. Political will is required to continue to hold programs accountable to these standards and act on the policy to end funding to programs that do not meet the employer-developed standards.

Outside of the emerging practices for CTE, Rhode Island needs to establish a goal of ensuing high quality career pathways are available for all students, and follow-through

on that goal by using policy and funding levers to make flexible career pathways widely available to and accessed by all students. Rhode Island does not provide students with substantial flexible career pathways programming outside of CTE. As a result, for a student who does not enroll in a CTE program, they do not receive measurable career awareness and exposure or the opportunity to develop technical and employability skills beyond the core academic content.

State policies presently dis-incentivize districts and schools from recruiting industry professionals into the teaching profession and the current certification process establishes onerous requirements and uncertain emergency certification procedures that present barriers to attracting such candidates.

Currently, all teachers in Rhode Island, including CTE teachers, must earn a bachelor's degree in education within five years of hire, for which industry experience does not substitute. (By contrast, neighboring states of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire only require a high school diploma or its equivalent for certification, and documentation of industry experience in the field of the license.) This is an issue for many potential educators who have years of experience in their field and years of training but do not have a bachelor's degree. Additionally, many CTE teachers enter the classroom unprepared to teach. Rhode Island does not have a program for preparing or supporting industry professions to enter the teaching profession, which prevents potential CTE teachers from gaining pedagogical expertise. A temporarily certified CTE educator cited "It doesn't matter if my degree is in Basket Weaving, I need to get a bachelor's degree even though I have over 10 years of experience in the actual field I'm teaching in." The only way for many professionals to teach in the classroom is through an emergency certificate, which can be pulled at any time without warning. These policies actively block many potential experienced industry professionals from entering the classroom, and thus block students from learning from their professional experiences. The State needs to remove policy barriers and streamline certification procedures to allow for more industry professions to enter the classroom.

Beyond the barriers, Rhode Island must also do more to provide professional development opportunities to enable core academic and CTE teachers to get into the workplace, increase their own knowledge of career pathways, and strengthen their instructional practices. This present lack of support prevents educators from being able to access the best practices in career education and from ensuring that all students are given access to quality instructors with experiences in valuable careers. The education community in Rhode Island has begun developing strong communities of practice focused on core academic subjects, early learning, and ed-tech. These established communities of practice should serve as a model for a potential similar effort to deliver professional development opportunities in career education.

Finally, RIDE used to run a teacher externship program that has been eliminated. Capacity still exists to reopen the program as an effective way to improve the industry

knowledge of all educators.

Targeted outcome 2b: **Equity and Access in Pathways**
Current Status: 1/Limited Progress

There is primarily only one comprehensive delivery model with uneven quality that is offered throughout the state, CTE, which is not widely popular among students and families. While CTE is technically accessible to every student in any school under a universal enrollment policy, logistical barriers ultimately limit access and results in inequitable participation in programs.

Rhode Island needs many more flexible career pathway opportunities in high-skill, high-demand fields to cover the three-quarters of students that do not access CTE opportunities. Preparation for white-collar jobs in fields such as allied health, IT, pre-engineering, and financial services exists in some Tech Centers, but are not well known to stakeholders. This leads to the widespread perception in the state that CTE prepares non-academically inclined young people for the skilled trades and is the choice for those not attending college—a tracking mechanism found elsewhere in the U.S.

Presently, all secondary students may attend any RIDE-approved CTE program located at any school in the state. (See April 2015 Report). However, the location of a program within a student's transportation region determines responsibility for transportation costs and, as a result, limits options for students interested in attending a program outside of their transportation region. Additionally, districts actively discourage students from leaving for CTE programs in other districts, as it sends funding out of the district.

From an equity perspective, Rhode Island has a complex access problem: only some students in the Tech Centers have access to education aligned with high-demand careers and students in the "college" track in comprehensive high schools are not introduced to the range of choices that exist in CTE and other career-focused programs. Some comprehensive high schools do have courses such as international business, child development, and coding, but it is unclear whether students are able to delve deeply into these elective areas and/or complete a work experience that would enable them to apply their learning. Most are single courses and there are generally one or two such courses per comprehensive high school.

The State's Asset Map shows that the GWB provides youth work immersion programming, but this is presently limited to CTE students and reaches less than 100 students per year. The GWB also offers summer youth employment programming (1,057 students served in FY16), but this programming is not connected to learning outcomes in schools. Neither of these programs are driven by standards identified by employers or are linked to high-skill, high-demand sectors and few criteria are used to maintain quality. The only outcomes measured are the number of youth who achieve a work readiness certificate (not valued by many local employers), and the number of

youth in a work experience, no matter the actual outcomes or quality of that experience.

The state must work to improve views of CTE by improving communication and quality, and must also improve access to career pathway opportunities outside of CTE to attract more students and families to career education offerings. Rhode Island needs to invest in more flexible career pathway opportunities specifically including career awareness and work-based learning experiences. It is unclear how many students in schools receive these opportunities presently, and there is no comprehensive delivery system for doing so. The State should lean on the model and early success of its recent Computer Science for Rhode Island initiative which will spread programming access to computer science in every school in the state by December 2017. The initiative relies on numerous public private partnerships and a menu of ways schools can engage to ensure wide availability of computer science while leveraging a mixed delivery system that recognizes that one size does not fit all students. The state could use a similar model of mixed program delivery to rapidly increase the number of students engaging in work-based learning and career awareness and exploration programming. As part of this effort, the State should retool and align its GWB work immersion and summer youth programming.

There are many available mechanisms for widespread access to postsecondary credentials of value, but too few low-income and students of color are gaining them.

Under Governor Raimondo's leadership, Rhode Island has universal dual and concurrent enrollment at all three of its public higher education institutions. Because of the Governor's $1.3 million investments in FY16 and FY17 in dual and concurrent enrollment, all youth that qualify for dual and concurrent coursework can enroll free of cost. This has doubled student participation in the program in one year.

However, there exist issues in equity in access to postsecondary credentials of value. Non-white, economically disadvantaged, English-language learners, and students with disabilities clearly gain these postsecondary credentials at much lower rates than their more privileged peers. Access to postsecondary credentials has been a priority of the Governor, as demonstrated by significant funding allocations for dual and concurrent enrollment programs. RIDE must work to better spread information about these available programs to students and families, and schools must work to better prepare students for these credentials.

Key Objective 3: Career-Focused Accountability Systems
Targeted outcome 3a: **Career-focused Indicators** *Current Status: 1/Limited Progress*

The State has not collected a comprehensive set of career indicators in the past.

Rhode Island has previously only collected and publicly reported career-focused indicators as required by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. These indicators are utilized for Perkins performance assessments but are not yet incorporated into other state accountability measures. Prior to NSFY Phase 1 RIDE only collected the following measures: The number and percentage of students who participate in a CTE program (analyzed by subgroup); the number and percentage of students who concentrate in a CTE program (analyzed by subgroup); the number and percentage of students who complete a CTE program (analyzed by subgroup); the number and percent of students who earn college credit that transfers to a higher education institution (analyzed by subgroup); the number of students who earn industry-recognized credentials (analyzed by subgroup).

RIDE has been able to collect all of the career-focused indicators required by NSFY Phase 1 except for Data Requirement 5, which is incomplete. RIDE claims that all students have access to all career pathways, as CTE programming is technically universally available, though logistical hurdles cited in Outcome 2b clearly make universal access a questionable claim. RIDE has also only defined career pathway completers as those students that complete CTE pathways, which limits the collection of data and leaves out the attainment of work-based learning experiences. RIDE can provide the number of students who earn different types of college credit that transfers to state higher education institutions, but cannot completely and reliably give the percentage of the senior class that earns these credentials as there may be students earning duplicative credits. For Data Requirement 5 RIDE only just received data on post high school outcomes and this data is limited to postsecondary college enrollment in-state. As part of its executed Data Sharing Agreement (Early Implementation Accomplishment 3), RIDE will obtain employment outcomes by October 15, 2016 to complete the data piece and will work with DataSpark to continue to improve the quality of the data. The State will also seek to incorporate private and out-of-state postsecondary enrollment data as much as possible.

Data are presently reviewed only internally at RIDE and this review has not been particularly focused on examining outcomes for equity. The State has multiple potential structures that could serve as places to review career-focused indicators on an annual basis but there is presently no process to do this regularly. RIDE has vastly improved its career education data collection since the beginning of Phase 1 of the grant as RIDE's Data Analysis and Research Director has served on the State's Core Team and has quickly been assembling and compiling the necessary data. The State has an excellent data reporting system, Info Works, which could be utilized to publicly report this data. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education regularly reviews this data to ensure equitable student academic outcomes and has expressed interest in doing the same with career indicators. Leaders at the Council, CTE Board and Trust, and

Governor's Workforce Board have submitted requests for this data in the past and could be public platforms to review this data more regularly.

Targeted outcome 3b: **Indicators have Weight**
Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

At present, the State has not incorporated career-focused indicators into its K-12 accountability system; however, the State is positioning itself to do so.

The ESSA engagement process offers RIDE an opportunity to include a career focused indicator in its accountability system. The ESSA Committee of Practitioners and the CTEBOT have met to review potential career-focused indicators. The ESSA Committee of Practitioners includes postsecondary educators, employers, workforce development leaders, and other key stakeholders, who have not provided input on the indicators used to assess students' career readiness in the past. All of the stakeholder groups have unanimously approved of inclusion of the proposed indicators.

Targeted outcome 3c: **Student recognitions and incentives for demonstrating career readiness**
Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

At present, secondary students are recognized and rewarded for developing and demonstrating career readiness in only limited situations.

Demonstrations of career readiness do not universally count for academic credit in Rhode Island and there are few examples of this practice occurring in the state. Typically only dual, concurrent and AP coursework count for academic credit in Rhode Island. Moreover, Rhode Island's graduation rules do not require student demonstration of career readiness.

While RIDE's present diploma system does not currently offer endorsements, revisions to the State's policy will include diploma endorsements, which can and should include endorsements for the fulfillment of high-skill, high-demand career pathways. The revised secondary school regulations appear to be a promising opportunity for the State to provide recognition to students for fulfilling the requirements of high-skill, high-demand pathways, but RIDE should work with employers to set these diploma endorsements. In addition, Rhode Island requires every graduating secondary student to complete a capstone project. This capstone experience could be better utilized as a demonstration of student career readiness.

Key Objective 4: Scaled Pathways that Culminate in Credentials of Value

Targeted outcome 4a: **Scale High-Quality Pathways**
Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

The delivery of career pathways are largely limited to CTE students, and these opportunities are not evenly delivered across communities.

The State's 10 Tech Centers offer a wide range of high-quality programs, but several need to be realigned or eliminated to meet current labor market demand and to lead to credentials of value. In addition, career pathways coursework is concentrated in the Tech Centers and almost entirely absent from comprehensive high schools. A small number of charter schools deliver high-quality career-focused education, among them the New England Laborers' Construction Career Academy and the Rhode Island Institute Nurses Middle College. Alternative options are available to a handful of students— many of them coming from underserved communities— through the MET, YearUp and Youthbuild. The State must significantly increase delivery models in order to effectively and efficiently offer pathways in high-skill, high-demand sectors to all secondary students. With changes, GWB career pathway programs, including work immersion and summer youth employment, can be scaled and effectively reach more students quickly.

Available for the first time in 2016, RIDE's Advanced Coursework Network (ACN) is an innovative supplement to dual enrollment that could provide a much broader mix of career-focused opportunities. This is an area for expansion and more development. Currently, students are enrolled in more than 600 fall semester and year-long courses through the ACN with a target of supporting more than 1,000 course enrollments for the 2016-17 school year. The majority of students are enrolled in career-focused courses through the ACN. As a result, RIDE has an exciting and high-potential delivery model in the ACN to offer face to face, blended and virtual work-based learning experiences as well as postsecondary courses and other experiences. The Network is in year one, but is advanced compared to many other states. Participation of providers has increased significantly and the state should continue to prioritize its expansion.

Funding and program approval processes are beginning to be used to scale up high-skill, high-demand CTE pathways or phase out CTE pathways that don't lead to credentials of value. However, there are no rigorous funding and program approval processes for more flexible pathway offerings that are being used to scale down or phase out ineffective or inefficient programming beyond CTE.

Grants are available through RIDE to start and scale up pathways in high-skill, high-demand sectors, and to introduce fresh ideas and up-to-date equipment into the system. The CTEBOT has established a process for closing ineffective CTE programs that don't lead to credentials of value, and several programs have already adjusted practice or closed as a result. RIDE is slowly increasing the quality of CTE programming but the must continue to work closely with the employer-led CTEBOT.

GWB-supported career pathways programming provide more flexible opportunities for

students; however, this programming must be more demand-driven and more tightly linked with schools. The GWB should consider supporting other potential delivery models besides existing work immersion and summer employment. There are potential opportunities to deliver more work-based learning experiences to students through local non-profits such as Junior Achievement, who offer work-based learning experiences that can be delivered fairly easily through districts and schools.

Targeted outcome 4b: **Expand work-based learning and career guidance systems**
Current Status: 1/Limited Progress

Effective career guidance systems have not taken root to help students make sound, well-informed decisions about course and pathway participation.

Career guidance opportunities are underdeveloped and not systematized in Rhode Island. There does not appear to be a system for ensuring that school guidance counselors deliver high-quality and universally available career advising, nor are they equipped to provide information on work-based learning opportunities. Counselors complain that they have heavy workloads and are not provided with support or information to help students make informed decisions about course and pathway participation.

Rhode Island requires that every middle and high school student develop an individualized learning plan (ILP) that details a student's passion, interests and goals for their education. Despite being a requirement, the ILP has failed to provide many students access to the supports that help them reach their full potential. The ILP is intended to be used by advisors and school counselors to support students with career goals. The plan is described as a "student directed planning and monitoring tool that customizes learning opportunities throughout their school experience, broadens their perspectives and supports attainment of goals." The ILP framework is in need of updating and the standards for ILPs are vague and loosely defined. Some schools use paper plans and rarely reference them. Others use a state-provided Way to Go platform that has low usage rates, and other schools create their own tools that students reference throughout their secondary career. It is clear that RIDE should have higher standards for the ILP and the State needs to invest in a uniform platform that can assist schools and students in developing an ILP.

Career counseling must become a higher priority in Rhode Island middle and high schools. An estimated 7% of Rhode Island seniors dropped out of high school last year, and the primary reason was because they did not see the connection between their academic schoolwork and how it prepares them for a career. Students need better guidance related to their career options and must see the connection between school and future employment opportunities. Unfortunately, career counseling often falls to the bottom of the priority list for many of the state's school counselors because they are responsible for a wide variety of duties, including non-counseling responsibilities (e.g.,

substitute teaching, overseeing student lunches).

Finally, the state must also find a way to get LMI and other economic information in the hands of schools, educators, counselors, and most importantly students. In a focus group of students that graduated from RI secondary programs not one student could appropriately identify a single high-skill, high-demand industry cluster in the State's economy.

Supporting a better system of career advising must be a priority for RIDE. As mentioned in Objective 2, the education community in Rhode Island has begun developing strong communities of practice focused on core academic subjects, early learning, and ed-tech. These established communities of practice should serve as examples for a potential similar effort to deliver professional development opportunities to counselors and best practices in counseling should be shared with school leaders and other educators. A statewide review of the ILP would provide an opportunity for the State to completely reimagine its counseling system. Other states have invested in tools that could provide students and educators with better labor market information and RI should seek to do the same.

There are not enough career pathway models that offer work-based learning experiences available for all students. Even many CTE programs lack work-based learning opportunities. For those that exist, there is little quality control to ensure that these experiences give students insight into the range of careers available and associated entry requirements to help students make informed choices about long-term goals.

The state provides roughly 1,200 students on-site career immersion, internship, and summer employment experiences through the GWB. This leaves roughly 9,000 students in each cohort that are not provided a state-supported experience. Of secondary aged youth in Rhode Island, 40% participated in the labor force in 2015. These experiences, however, were likely not linked to helping students make informed choices about long-term goals. Rhode Island does not have an inventory of work-based learning placements or opportunities and must establish a stronger infrastructure for offering these opportunities. Existing GWB supported work-based learning experiences must be improved to be higher quality, pathways-aligned and employer-aligned. There are presently no resources available for GWB-supported or CTE work-based learning experiences to include authentic assessments and involvement of employers. Work-based learning opportunities are only given credit through some CTE programs, and are not linked to other secondary curriculum or prioritized by industry sector needs.

The employer-led CTEBOT has a strong opportunity to review work-based learning opportunities available through CTE programming. As of now, there is little data on how many programs offer work-based learning, and the CTEBOT should require programs to report this information. There does not seem to have been a systemic attempt at

developing authentic assessments of work-based learning experiences by employers, but the CTEBOT could help fill this need for CTE programs, which could then be expanded beyond CTE. There needs to be a process for employers to identify outcomes for these opportunities. GWB and CTE supported work-based learning rules could be established and/or be better aligned between secondary curriculum and prioritized industry sector needs. RIDE has previously moved to require that all schools recognize credit earned via the virtual ACN, and could require that schools similarly recognize work-based learning opportunities that align with secondary curriculum and prioritized industry sector needs.

Targeted outcome 4c: **Credentials Have Value**

Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

While a cross-sector process led by employers has been used to identify industry credentials with labor market value, there are a number of other available postsecondary credentials that could be linked to potential labor market value outside of CTE.

The CTEBOT is in the process of identifying industry credentials with labor market value. However, dual and concurrent Enrollment and AP coursework should also be evaluated for relevance to high-skill, high-demand fields. The state should use a similar process that the CTEBOT is using to review industry certificates for employers to review all postsecondary credentials available to ensure they all have labor market value.

Several programs in the state offer pathway completers postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that are "stackable" and articulate to progressively higher-level credentials, certifications, or degrees. Three new P-TECH programs have opened which offer students postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials. While these programs technically are universally accessible, logistical hurdles often prevent student participation, and they are limited in access by geography and capacity. Several comprehensive schools in the state have indicated interest in developing similar models, and the state should use the framework developed by P-TECH to scale this model.

There is an established systemic articulation agreement between secondary and all postsecondary institutions in the state that awards credit to high school students who complete college coursework in all sectors.

The dual and concurrent enrollment regulations approved by the Board of Education on April 27, 2015 require all public institutions in the state award credit to high school students who complete dual and concurrent enrollment coursework in any sector. As a result, articulation of dual and concurrent enrollment credits in Rhode Island is a sustained practice.

Key Objective 6: Ensure Cross-Institutional Alignment

Targeted outcome 6a: **Mapping the Career Preparation Delivery System**
Current Status: 2/Emerging Practice

Rhode Island does not have an overall vision or theory of action for the delivery system that is tightly aligned with current and projected needs of the labor market.

A 2015 report found that: "The current education and workforce system is fragmented and not always aligned. A comprehensive system needs to foster collaboration and coordination between secondary, adult and postsecondary education and training. In addition, a highly effective system must engage business and industry as partners with programs to design and implement high quality career and technical education." The lack of alignment, and synergy with the needs of employers, continues to be a problem and hinders the state's ability to effectively deliver career preparation programming.

The State is using the occasion of NSFY to bring together large and varied groups of stakeholders to discuss the vision for career preparation as a first step to creating a delivery system. While the conveners had the goal of eliciting views of career–focused education and particularly readiness of employers to engage with schools and young people, the groups also help to promote dialogue about career preparation.

Insufficient information is available to fully determine gaps and overlaps in state career pathway offerings in all parts of the state for all students, but assumptions can be drawn that show significant existing gaps.

It is clear that there are large gaps in career pathways offerings in all parts of the state for many students. The data show that few secondary students are enrolled in career pathways programming. These data are insufficient in comprehensively providing a picture of all of the gaps and overlaps in career pathways offerings because it lacks work-based learning and other more flexible career pathway experiences, and demonstrates why this area is still an emerging practice.

There is considerable work to be done to ensure career pathways for all students. Most of the JFF focus group interviewees believed that the lack of integration between the Tech Centers and comprehensive high schools is not problematic. Several CTE directors interviewed, as well as other stakeholders, mentioned the need to increase career awareness and exploration in elementary and middle schools, but some CTE directors said they are actively prevented from marketing their programs and offerings to younger students even within their own district.

There are several opportunities that students are accessing in growing numbers to earn postsecondary credentials. However, there is no state supported career awareness and exploration programming, and there is no mechanism to track whether this is happening

at the local level. Additionally, work-based learning opportunities are limited to GWB supported programming, which currently has limited reach. It is clear the state should provide more flexible programming to increase participation in career awareness and exploration programming and work-based learning.

Student demographic information and disaggregated outcome data are difficult to comprehensively analyze because of their incompleteness, but the State has begun to collect this information and analyze it regularly.

The State is limited to analyzing demographic information and outcome data to the small population that currently receives career pathways programming. Additionally, the outcome data available for programs is significantly limited. It is unclear what types of outcomes youth are receiving from the existing programming. Career Pathway completer data is limited to those students who complete high-quality CTE programs. This definition limits more flexible potential delivery models and potential increases in participation. Regular sharing of data between agencies has limited the compilation of this information until NSFY Phase I. As a result, all relevant state agencies has signed a data sharing agreement to more regularly share this data. There should also be established procedures for stakeholders to analyze this data on a regular process.

Targeted outcome 6b: **Aligning the Career Preparation Delivery System**
Current Status: 1/Limited Progress

One of the biggest challenges for Rhode Island is that there has been no map or alignment of the career preparation delivery system.

There have been many efforts over the years to attempt to improve career preparation in K-12, but none of these efforts have found to be sustainable. A key reason for this is that there have not been true efforts to align the system to better deliver career preparation. The legislature and others have often resorted to adding committees and structures, like the CTEBOT and Career Pathways Advisory Committee, but there has not been a sustained effort to see how these additions would fit or drive an overall system. These newly established structures have often wandered through a mission-finding exercise, and have struggled to find authority in their work.

As a result, there are significant gaps both in breadth and quality of career-focused options available for all youth. Most significantly, Rhode Island lacks a work-based learning delivery system that links young people and their education programs with opportunities to apply their learning in workplaces. Despite a small number of employers now taking high school students into their workplaces, employers and educators are too often at a loss about how to put their ideas for supporting young people's career development into practice. Common complaints include: too many silos; too much territoriality; reinvention of programs that failed in the past; and a

general sense that states bordering Rhode Island are further ahead in addressing the education/employer disconnect.

Creating a career preparation delivery system and aligning career readiness initiatives is a new priority for the Rhode Island NSFY Core Team. Each core team member associated with a specific agency is responsible for leading the work associated with the State's career readiness objectives. Thanks to robust cross-agency buy-in, regular meetings, and strong leadership from RIDE and the Governor's Office, the Core Team has made progress in jumpstarting the conversation about what it means to say that all Rhode Island students should be college- and career-ready. The Core Team has used this opportunity to introduce an aligned system map that can focus career preparation into a system in the action plan.

There is no existing continuous improvement plan that includes an on-going analysis of all of the disparate parts of the delivery system.

Because the system has never truly been aligned, the state has lacked a body responsible for tracking career preparation for all students and ensuring that the parts of the delivery system are functioning synergistically and delivering results for all students. Recently, the Governor utilized the state's Office of Performance Management (OPM) to help monitor progress of a Drug Addiction and Overdose Task force strategic plan. OPM convenes relative agency heads quarterly for the sole purpose of reviewing quarterly benchmarks and developing ways to continuously improve the State's plan to address Rhode Island's persistent problem of drug addiction and overdose. The State should consider following a similar process for its NSFY three-year action plan.

Appendix B: Design Thinking – An Overview

PrepareRI Ambassadors: Design Thinking Overview[10]

Over the next few months, we'll use design thinking activities adapted from the *Teachers Design for Education* design thinking curriculum to help you research and understand your problem of practice, as well as create your capstone.

What is Design Thinking?

Design thinking is the practice of putting people and their experiences at the center of our design efforts. It enables us to understand how people relate to and experience the world around them and how, with this understanding, we can anticipate what people need and desire. Also known as human-centered design, this creative problem-solving approach enables us to discover new, untapped areas of opportunity and possibility, and develop more thoughtful, impactful, and innovative ideas. There are six phases of the design thinking process:

1. **DEFINE** a clear, human-centered and open-ended design challenge.
2. **EXPLORE** a new understanding of your design challenge.
3. **REFLECT** a clear direction for solving your design challenge.
4. **IMAGINE** an exciting idea that will positively impact people's experience.
5. **PLAY** with a prototype of your idea for testing and validation.
6. **TRANSFORM** with a meaningful solution and problem-solving approach.

Storytelling is also an integral part of design thinking, whish is used as a vehicle for change. It is a way to help connect meaning to information, to create connections between you and your audience, to shift people's thinking by tapping into empathy and emotion, and to make abstract concepts real and tangible. During our process, we'll focus on how you can present something your audience can not only relate to, but will also motivate and inspire them.

For more information, you can visit www.td4ed.com.

[10] Adapted from "RI Career Readiness Fellowship: Design Thinking Overview," compiled by Kirtley Fisher of the Business Innovation Factory.

The "Define" Phase

A design challenge stems from a problem you want to tackle, one that will allow you to look beyond the current paradigm and solutions to wholly new possibilities. It is important to fully explore and understand the problem itself before moving toward solutions. As your research moves through subsequent phases, you will continue to gain a deeper perspective about your design challenge. Stay flexible and adaptable as you learn more about your challenge, and be open to reframing it.

5 Why's Activity

This is a simple but effective way at getting to deeper insights, underlying issues, and the root of a problem. By asking "Why?" around a given statement – as many times as it makes sense – it enables you to dig below the surface-level assumptions or symptoms of a problem in order to find its root cause.

Design Challenge Activity

Now that you have a sense of the root cause(s) of your problem – especially after defining bright spots and barriers – reframe it as a human-centered, open-ended design challenge. Use one of the following templates to rewrite it.

Version 1

How might we redesign/reimagine the _____ (topic) experience for _____ (group of people) in order to _____ (what they are trying to achieve)?

Version 2

How might we create a way to help _____ (group of people) _____ (what they are trying to achieve)?

You can use the following questions to help assess if your challenge meets the criteria of a good design challenge. If not, revise it and try again.

- Is this challenge measurable, so that the goal or impact is clear?
- Can you tackle this challenge with the time and resources available to you?
- Is this challenge open-ended enough to allow for a number of different solutions?
- Is this challenge focused on people's needs, rather than on technology, an approach, a process, or a solution?

The "Explore" Phase

The activities in this phase facilitate deeper interactions with others so that you can uncover insight into why things are the way they are, and see your challenge from a different point of view. It is with these insights that you can build a more meaningful and valuable experience for your users. This is the time to be curious and empathetic to how others experience this challenge.

In addition to the research you have undertaken, interviewing people familiar with you're the topic of your problem of practice will help you to uncover the "why" of your design challenge. Below are some interview methods you can use as you explore.

Individual interviews
Engaging people one-on-one for in-depth conversations. Good for:

- Discovering the thoughts, feelings, emotions, attitudes, motivations, and aspirations of each person
- Establishing a rapport with the person to gain more open, honest perspectives

Group interviews
Engaging multiple people around a topic. Good for:

- Learning about a culture of a group through their interpersonal dynamics
- Providing a platform for many voices to be heard

Expert Interviews
Engaging those who already have deep knowledge about the subject. Good for:

- Building context around how a system works, the history around your topic, cultural or sociological implications, regulatory implications, or new technologies
- Helping stakeholders feel like they are part of the process

Here's what you need to know about conducting interviews:

Setting up meetings
Contact the specific people that you would like to engage to set up a time for a meeting. Give a quick elevator pitch (a concise and persuasive summary) about your project to give them background on why you'd like to learn from them.

Interviewing tips
Below are a few tips for what to think about when you are conducting your interviews.

Do's:

- Take notes during every interview
- Build rapport with your interviewee
- Ask open-ended questions, starting them with "what," "why," or "how"
- Allow for pauses – sometimes silence is a great way to prompt people to reflect on what they've said and go deeper
- Watch for physical and emotional signals
- Ask follow-up questions, especially ones that get at "why"
- Ask clarifying questions if something isn't clear or if there are inconsistencies
- Encourage stories around specific experiences or instances
- Use active listening
- Thank them for their time
- Take a few minutes to jot down top-of-mind learnings and thoughts after each interview

Try not to:

- Ask leading questions, ones that have assumptions built into them
- Ask closed-ended (yes/no) questions
- Let your questions ramble or trail off
- Rush to get to the next question
- Interrupt with acknowledgements, confirmations, or "uh huh"s
- Interject your views

Troubleshooting

He or she . . .	*You say . . .*
says something and you're not sure what it means.	"When you say '_____,' can you tell me what you mean by that? I just want to make sure I understand you correctly."
voices a concern that he/she is not being helpful.	"You're giving us just what we need!"
has gotten completely off-topic.	"Let's stop here and shift to another topic."

Debrief

After every interview, write down answers to these questions to help with your analysis:

1. What were the main themes or learnings that stood out in this interview?
2. What mattered most to the interviewee(s)?
3. What did the interviewee(s) say or do that surprised you?

Appendix C: PrepareRI Ambassador Application

PrepareRI Ambassador Initiative

In January 2017, it was announced that Rhode Island was one of only ten states to be awarded a competitive grant to support career readiness and postsecondary attainment. The $2 million New Skills for Youth grant, made possible by JPMorgan Chase and the Council of Chief State School Officers, will fund Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI), a statewide initiative to improve access to skills-based education and training for high-skill, well-paying careers. To realize this work, the Rhode Island Department of Education is calling for PrepareRI Ambassadors, talented, dedicated, visionary individuals whose efforts and expertise will positively impact *all* students in *all* schools across the state.

Overview

The inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors will be comprised of 5 – 10 educators from all levels of K-12 and postsecondary education and from a diverse collection of positions and responsibilities. **Each PrepareRI Ambassador will receive a $5,000 stipend for the period of April 2017 to June 2018.** The Ambassadors' primary function will be to develop policy and inform practice as they pertain to career education and the realization of career pathways in high-skill, high-demand industry sectors.

Background

From June to September 2016, members of multiple state agencies, educators from various K-12 and postsecondary institutions, and employers from across industries gathered to discuss and assess the current state of career education. The discussions and assessments led to the development of *Prepare Rhode Island: A Unified Action Plan for Career Readiness* (known as "the Action Plan"), which captures both the goals and aspirations for what career readiness can be in the state of Rhode Island. Key to the realization of these goals and aspirations is a cohort of educator leaders known as PrepareRI Ambassadors.

Scope of Work

Each PrepareRI Ambassador will be expected to do the following:

- Develop resources and toolkits to support fellow educators that contribute to a growing body of knowledge of career education in Rhode Island.
- Attend all meetings for the duration of the contract, including those at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), regional informational sessions, and PrepareRI Summits.
- Help develop and share career education best practices with educators throughout the state.
- Contribute to the creation and coordination of career education professional development opportunities.
- Serve as a champion of career education during and beyond his or her tenure as a PrepareRI Ambassador.

Timeline

Being a PrepareRI Ambassador is a part-time commitment, allowing Ambassadors to attend to their full-time responsibilities while influencing state-level policy decisions and developing tools to support peers. As mentioned above, each member of the inaugural cohort will receive a stipend of $5,000 for contracted services from April 2017 to June 2018. The PrepareRI Ambassador experience will be blended, combining in-person meetings with online collaboration. A suggested timeline is as follows:

- **January 30, 2017 Application window opens**
- **March 3, 2017 Application window closes**
- **April 2017 Inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors is named**
- **April 2017 PrepareRI Ambassador orientation at the Rhode Island Department of Education**
- **Spring 2017* Inaugural PrepareRI Summit**
- **Summer 2017* Career Education Institute (statewide professional development)**
- **September 2017* PrepareRI Summit**
- **December 2017* PrepareRI Summit**
- **March 2018* PrepareRI Summit**
- **June 2018* PrepareRI Summit**

*Exact dates and times to be determined

PrepareRI Ambassadors – Application

Annually, applications will be solicited for up to 10 PrepareRI Ambassadors. The Ambassadors will be recruited from throughout the education sector, including: K-12 general education teachers; career and technical education teachers; K-12 school counselors; a principal from a comprehensive high school; a superintendent from a comprehensive school district; postsecondary educators; and parents of current K-12 students. The first cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors will be named in March 2017. Ambassadors will be paid a stipend of $5,000 for a period of service from April 2017 to June 2018.

The window for the application process **opens Monday, January 30, 2017, and closes on Friday, March 3, 2017.** This application can be found at:
http://www.ride.ri.gov/PrepareRIAmbassadors/Application.aspx

Applications are due March 3, 2017. Please submit this application, the application project proposal (two-page maximum), a résumé (two-page maximum), and up to three references with contact information to PrepareRIAmbassadors@ride.ri.gov.

Questions regarding either the program or the application may be directed to
PrepareRIAmbassadors@ride.ri.gov

I. Personal Information

Name: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Organization: _____ Position: _____

II. Application Project Proposal

In two pages or less, please submit a project proposal to address one of the five career readiness areas of need listed below. Proposals should include practical, achievable yet bold ideas that will help Rhode Island achieve the goals of the Action Plan. If chosen to serve as a PrepareRI Ambassador, your tenure will focus on developing resources and toolkits that will be used by educators statewide.

III. Areas of Interest

Each PrepareRI Ambassador will be required to develop resources and toolkits to support fellow educators that contribute to a growing body of knowledge of career education in Rhode Island. Ideally, the capstone will not only serve a practical purpose, but will also allow the Ambassador to research and better understand a particular area of interest. The inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors will explore five specific areas of career education in depth.

Please rank the following career readiness areas of need in order of interest (1 through 5, with "1" indicating greatest interest and "5" indicating least interest):

_____ **Employer engagement.** Statewide structures for convening K-12, postsecondary, employer, and workforce development communities have been statutorily formalized, but have yet to be consistently leveraged to identify high-skill, high demand sectors. There is a need to identify and align the skills and competencies required of the current labor market and to make those skills and competencies known throughout the state. There is also a need to assess and adjust skills and competencies on an ongoing basis in response to an evolving labor market.

_____ **Rigor and quality in career pathways for ALL students.** Currently, access both to flexible career pathways and to career awareness and exposure are limited to existing career and technical education (CTE) programs. While technically available to all students, logistical barriers, such as transportation and program quality, impede or restrict equitable enrollment in CTE courses and centers, especially for low-income students and students of color. There is a need to make high-quality career pathways available to *all* students.

_____ **Career-focused accountability systems.** The state has not yet incorporated career-focused indicators into its K-12 accountably system. The indicators that have been measured have been restricted only to those students who have completed CTE pathways, limiting the scope and degree of those measurements and value of consequent data. There is a need for career-focused indicators to apply to all students, which will allow data to be reviewed for equity and to drive the recognition and celebration of secondary students who demonstrated career readiness, regardless of program.

_____ **Scaled pathways that culminate in credentials of value.** As suggested above, current career pathways are largely limited to CTE students and vary in quality and degree of equity. In addition to making career pathways available to all, there is a need to develop effective career guidance systems to assist students in making sound, well-informed decisions about course and pathway participation. There is also a need to identify potential and existing pathways that are outside of CTE but result either in career readiness or postsecondary credentials of value.

_____ **Ensure cross-institutional alignment.** Rhode Island is developing a career education delivery system that is aligned with current and projected needs of the labor market. A crucial step in achieving this alignment is increasing career awareness and exploration in all schools, especially at the elementary and secondary levels. There is a need to expand the analysis of demographic information and outcome data, which are significantly limited, beyond the small population that currently receives pathway programming. This expanded analysis will help identify more flexible career education delivery models, which, it is hoped, will drive increases in the participation in pathways that are aligned with labor market needs.

IV. Confirmation of Commitment

Serving as a PrepareRI Ambassador is not only a worthwhile endeavor, but also a significant commitment. Below, you are asked to consider what being a PrepareRI Ambassador entails and to make a commitment in light of that consideration.

For the inaugural cohort, serving as a PrepareRI Ambassador is a fifteen-month commitment – April 2017 to June 2018 – requiring attendance at all meetings, including the initial orientation, check-ins, professional development opportunities, and PrepareRI Summits.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

The main deliverable of the PrepareRI Ambassador program is the development resources and toolkits to support fellow educators that contribute to a growing body of knowledge of career education in Rhode Island.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

PrepareRI Ambassadors will help develop and share career education best practices with educators throughout the state. Ambassadors will also contribute to the creation and coordination of career education professional development opportunities for the benefit of their peers.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

PrepareRI Ambassadors will serve as champions of career education during and beyond their tenures.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Language for Introductory Emails

Over the last six months, Rhode Island has embarked on a planning initiative to make sure that career education works for Rhode Island's children. To support these efforts, Rhode Island developed a three-year proposal, the goal of which is to align current expressions of career education in ways that ensure that all Rhode Island students exit high school with the skills needed for both workforce and postsecondary success.

Derek Niño, a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has been tasked with developing strategies to support the development of high-quality career education programming for all children. Before joining RIDE, Derek taught high school mathematics for 11 years and chaired the school's English-Language Development department. He has also led or contributed to educational transformation efforts at the site, district, and county levels in Southern California and at the state level in Delaware. He now hopes to apply his experience and expertise while working with you for the benefit of Rhode Islanders.

Derek is a passionate advocate for improving our educational system for all involved – students, families, and educators alike. It would be incredibly helpful to gather your thoughts on how we can operationalize and support the success of the strategies included in our three-year action plan. Your feedback will be influential to both the work of RIDE and to the development of Derek's work as a doctoral student.

As a leader in the field, Derek would enjoy the opportunity to:

- Partner with you to identify current career education best practices
- Share with you data regarding existing career pathways and their outcomes
- Listen to you and your perceptions of and aspirations for career education, both within your organization and across the state
- Work with you to develop local and statewide responses to career education that result in the creation of pathways that lead to fulfilling, high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs for all

We are hoping/ Derek is hoping that these conversations might occur before December 16. Realizing that this is a busy time of year, he is willing to accommodate your schedule in every way possible. If an in-person meeting is not possible at this time, a phone conversation would suffice.

Or:

Let me introduce Derek Niño, a Harvard doctoral candidate working in the Office of College and Career Readiness, who is developing a statewide teacher leader initiative. Inspired by the work done around the New Skills for Youth grant proposal, this initiative is part of an effort to identify and promote high-quality career pathways. Derek would like to:

- Partner with you to identify current career education best practices
- Share with you data regarding existing career pathways and their outcomes
- Listen to you and your perceptions of and aspirations for career education, both within your organization and across the state
- Work with you to develop local and statewide responses to career education that result in the creation of pathways that lead to fulfilling, high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs for all

Thank you,

Appendix D: Interview Questions_General

1. How long have you been in education and in what capacity(ies)?

2. How long have you been with [organization] and in what capacity(ies)?

3. What is your personal goal for education in general and for the work you do in your position in particular?

4. How could expressions of educational choice in the state, such as the Advanced Coursework Network, Dual Enrollment, charter schools, CTE, adult education, etc., benefit from or support career education?

5. How would you define “career education” and “career readiness?”

6. What do you think is going well when it comes to career education in your system and how can that be applied to systems across the state?

7. My work at RIDE involves working with educators to align existing career education options for the creation of high-quality career pathways. These career pathways should lead to high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs. How do you envision this alignment being realized?

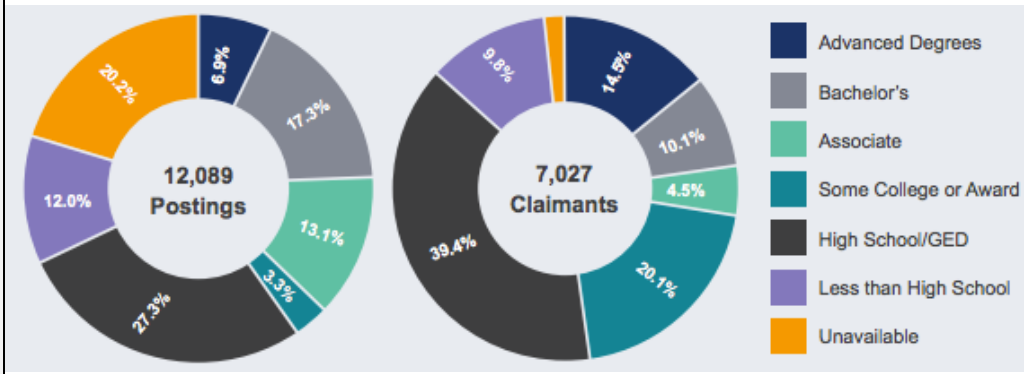
8. Anything else?

Appendix E: Informational Flyer, "Creating High-Quality K-12 Career Pathways"

PREPARE Rhode Island

Creating High-Quality K-12 Career Pathways

The Goal	Over the next three years, create high-quality K-12 career pathways that lead to high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs. To accomplish this, a network of educators from every elementary, middle, and high school will receive professional development for and support in implementing career education best practices. A guiding coalition of 20 career education leaders – PrepareRI Ambassadors – will be empowered and trusted to lead this effort.
The Need	The current career preparation systems are not aligned to employer demand and industry need. While there are promising structures, programs, and practices throughout the state, their misalignment is resulting both in positions going unfilled and in underemployment.
The Economic Reality	The following Rhode Island employment data are for the third quarter, 2016. The share of job postings for which the usual educational requirement was either a bachelor's or an associate degree was 30 percent. Claimants with those degrees represented 15 percent of the total collecting. The share of job postings for which the usual education requirement was a high school degree or lower was 39 percent, while the number of claimants with that level of education represented 50 percent of the total collecting.



(Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, *Labor Supply and Demand: Third Quarter 2016*. http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/pdf/s&d316.pdf

Of the **20** occupations with the most unemployment insurance claimants per job posting (those occupations that have a **job surplus**):

- 13 require a **high school diploma or GED**
- 5 require **less than high school**
- 1 requires "postsecondary experience"
- 1 requires an associate degree

Of the **20** occupations with the most postings per unemployment insurance claimants (those occupations that have a **job shortage**):

- 7 require a **bachelor's degree**
- 5 require a **master's degree**
- 1 requires a doctorate or professional experience
- 2 require an associate degree
- 1 requires "postsecondary experience
- 3 require a high school diploma or GED
- 1 requires less than high school

Implication: Those with **higher educational attainment** have a **greater chance of being employed and of staying employed**.

Existing Career Pathways: Opportunities and Alignment

Promising structures already exist in Rhode Island for the creation of high-quality career pathways. Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) programs provide opportunities for gaining hands-on experience, acquiring academic and career-related knowledge, and developing job-specific skills. Other opportunities include the Advanced Coursework Network (ACN) and Dual Enrollment. The Advanced Coursework Network allows students to enroll in any course in the Network, courses that might not be available to them at their schools of record. Dual Enrollment partners high schools with Rhode Island's three public institutes of higher education, allowing students to augment their high school experience by concurrently enrolling in college courses.

The above opportunities are just a few that exist in the state. Ideally, ***all* opportunities that lead to high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs would be identified and made available to *all* students in Rhode Island**. The process would be as follows:

PrepareRI and Career Education: Working In Rhode Island

Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI) is a commitment by the State of Rhode Island to improve the career readiness and postsecondary attainment of all Rhode Island youth to prepare them with the skills they need for jobs that pay.

Assisting in the realization of the PrepareRI commitment, a cohort of 20 career education leaders – **PrepareRI Ambassadors** – will be recruited to serve as a guiding coalition. Ambassadors will be tasked with:

- Analyzing the state's current career readiness efforts, focusing on how those efforts can be improved and aligned for the creation of high-quality career pathways
- Writing data-rich, research-based capstones that will inform career education policy and practice
- Working with educators across the state to improve career education curricula and to share best practices
- Facilitating regional meetings and PrepareRI Summits, quarterly convenings of stakeholders – employers, educators, and community members from across the state – to discuss career education for the benefit of *all* students and, ultimately, *all* Rhode Islanders

Over the next three years, PrepareRI will see the improvement of career education, an increase in students' career readiness, and the creation of high-quality career pathways that lead to high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs.

Career education is *working* in Rhode Island.

Appendix F: Interview Notes

Analysis

• CR is possessing the soft skills – time management, problem solving, self-management – to get a job
• Workforce training → career awareness and exploration
• "Stepping Up" → a previous effort to get people to stay in a field and to improve their positions within that field
  ○ Consider the custodian at a hospital who gets on-the-job training to advance, going from custodian, to tech, to nurse, etc.
  ○ Relied on "cheerleaders and motivation" → the need for support

• Among some, there is still the perception that CTE is "just vocational ed" and is for "those kids"
• CTE gets students engaged
• CTE teaches collegiality among students
• Understanding that RIDE asks for data/information, but doesn't provide the vehicle for delivering it
  ○ Have to follow up and keep to your word
  ○ RIDE has not shuttered a program (suggesting that there is either no quality control, that keeping programs open is a political move, etc.)

• Need for consistency in what RIDE does • The department "moves from shiny thing to shiny thing" • Need to incorporate technology into the mix, either to facilitate communication or to help with scheduling (mine: sounds like a call for something like Naviance)
• In Rhode Island, there can be a coordinated effort among RIDE, DLT, and industry • A lot of "brain drain" from RI • Need to be honest about what opportunities exist in Rhode Island • "If you raise rigor, you have to raise support" – mine: If RIDE is going to make more demands (or opportunities), then it has to increase the amount of support that it offers • Evaluation system has left a bad taste in everyone's mouths • "Many people don't think about RIDE outside of 'what do I have to do for RIDE.'" – Mine: Compliance mindset as opposed to seeing working with RIDE as an opportunity to improve • Need for internships and hands-on experiences

• There are discrepancies between what we do and how they're measured • We should be educating problem solvers • If give data to RIDE, don't get anything back → no follow through • No consistency in the field – different lengths of courses (3 yr, 4 yr, .5 semester) • Feels like there's not enough feedback so that the directors can leverage their positions • With data, XXXXX can go to superintendent and say that RIDE is expecting this change • "Disconnect between what counselors do and what they are supposed to do. (RIDE will say) they need to do more career planning." RIDE made the demand, but school was left to fix it

• SBCs are "overwhelmed," often doing the work that are assigned to teachers
  ○ Mine: This was in response to my question as to whether or not SBCs are being underutilized. This got me to thinking that SBCs might be overwhelmed because *they're being used in the wrong way*
• XXXXX using WayToGo, but it's being used sporadically and in the limited capacity
  ○ 5-8 educators need resources and a way to offer experiences

• An internship creates this opportunity
• Need to provide students with breadth of experiences
• "We aren't really good at the career piece"
• Naviance can be used for this – could reveal the limitations of a passion (i.e., if a student is a critical consumer, then will realize, when presented with information, that career choice might be limiting/limited)
• XXXXX
• Looking for quality internships
• Maker spaces in elementary schools
  ○ Place where students can explore
  ○ Students are building and creating
  ○ Excelling in things that interest
• Mine: Mentorship
  ○ A successful model has been coaches, which is scalable
  ○ Embedded regular development will get results
  ○ It's really about teacher training, done by a master teacher
  ○ Lacking high-quality teachers in urban district
  ○ Using this coaching for technology now
• Internships
• RIDE's goals and the field's might not be the same; RIDE could facilitate people coming together

• CTE programs are framed as rigorous classes that develop portable skills • The two existing approved programs are rigorous and benefit from a relationship with URI (validity and coverage)

- Chose to offer the most rigorous PLTW pathway
    - Increases the value of CTE
    - Attracts the best students from outside the district
- The more the success of this district are shared, the more this district is seen as a paradigm and would therefore enjoy protection
- **This idea of a rigorous program will only be as good as the evaluation process. In order for programs like these to be valued and protected in the region, they need the stamp of approval from RIDE.**
- Mine: How does the environment influence the types of CTE courses that are offered? Will more affluent districts/regions offer one type of program – with commensurate rigor – and poorer district offer another?
- Ambassador qualities:
    - They need to be excellent communicators – they will be doing a lot of PR
    - They need experience and credibility – what are they bringing to the table? (Mine: While a younger teacher might have energy and vision, he or she might not have credibility within the state.)

- Kids tend to be interested in those things that they're exposed to
- Could use the entrepreneurial component to expose students to those things that are common to all small businesses, agnostic of field or product
- ACN:
    - Challenges
        - Transportation within the schedule – there and back
        - Challenging in that what students are interested in is physically far away
        - Deals have been made
        - Gets at the inconsistency of implementation and expectation
- For a district like this, get very little communication/outreach
- Got no technical support
- There's little communication of expectations and what is required to meet those expectations
- Using XXXXX
- Would benefit from working with other districts that are building programs outside of a CTE centers
- RIDE has taken career pathways out of teaching and learning
    - Limited conversation around that, so the natural space to talk about connections to CE has been disrupted

- (I revealed that the "carrot" of funding the PrepareRI Ambassador initiative is at least delayed)
- In the middle of CTE review process – XXXXX
- Feels that some career pathways still lead to postsecondary education, requiring the requisite preparation
- Lots of attention to CTE centers and not to comprehensive high schools
- Would like to see communication around funding and problem solving

- Frustrating that RIDE requires a defined sequence of courses that must go in order
- Difficult to do in light of scheduling (a source of conflict)

- Philosophical difference between new and old guard
- Mine: The funding realities of CTE will not go away soon. However, there should be opportunities to leverage relationships to the fullest.

- Assistant superintendent/superintendent/director meeting
- Mine: How might one Ambassador represent this region and other regions that seem to be well-off?
- PLTW
  - Can use to promote a rigorous skill set
  - Is used as a proxy for an effective CTE program – if meeting PLTW expectations, then meeting CTE expectations
  - Hard time recruiting students
  - Regardless of how promising the program might be, scheduling is still an issue
- The fact that students have to take classes in order is something of a sticking point (to what degree is it true that classes have to be taken in order?)
- Most of the districts in this (informal) consortium don't have an SBC (how, then, can Ambassadors serve this and similar groups?)
- Ultimately, not accepting Perkins funding allows for flexibility and means that the district will not be scrutinized by the state

- I'm still wondering how I can incorporate adult ed into my efforts
  - Contextualized instruction – academic skills with workplace content
- Coordinated work readiness and career exposure
- WIOA – look for summary
- Need to be able to share these competencies
- Look for similarities among the various options
- [To celebrate adult ed] ddult ed, need to "design" adult ed into these initiatives
- Digital portfolio – can show college and career readiness, can capture career readiness through this portfolio
- Career education – career-cluster level skills
- Collaborative Learning for Outcomes – research this
  - Brought leaders together quarterly
  - Created exemplars at different levels
- 21st Century Standards
  - In the tech standards, there are still soft skills (like teaming)
  - MassCIS.intorcareers.org
  - GWB Career Maps
    - Workforce On-Ramps
  - Getting beyond local – this resonates with me in terms of Rhode Island as a network
    - Start in the classrooms
    - XXXXX likes the idea of starting earlier in terms of exposure, which

might create the thirst beyond the local • Mine: Hard to celebrate something, like adult ed, if it's not a recurrent part of the thinking or the environment
• Conducted a site visit instead of an interview, which was just as, if not more, valuable • Met XXXXX, XXXXX, XXXXX, XXXXX, XXXXX, XXXXX – all are passionate educators • Internships were mentioned • Idea that any effort – in-house or RIDE-supported – will rely on buy-in of educators, but can start with a passionate few
• Part of an informal group of principals and district office leaders who decide who provides what program and who gets what money • Since principals haven't been part of the NSFY/career preparation system discussions, it might be too late to get them onboard with the idea of Ambassadors • Sees value in consistent data entry/data archiving systems

• Take a look at the 8 fields and 16 priorities XXXXX provided
• "Brain Drain" story on RIDataHub
• Basic Education Program (BEP)
  ○ Started in 1980
  ○ Revised in 2009
  ○ Is being used by superintendents as the basis for "what's good" in their districts

• Goal for P-TECH:
  ○ At 9th-grade level, talking to kids about what it is necessary to work in defense
  ○ Looking at areas of focus and at the employers tied to the programs, making sure that the incomes are ~$40+K
• Unfortunate that there's a line between comprehensive and CTE
• There needs to be a blurred concept of the two, between academic and professional
• Talks to employers all the time in high-skill, high-wage fields
  ○ Say the same things about career readiness and professional skills
• Wage thresholds
  ○ View is that any company that offers an income under $39K is not something that the state would want to fund
  ○ Qualified Jobs Act
• Need to look at Brookings Stuff
  ○ 5 industries
  ○ 2 blended
• Less about specific fields and more about the common sets of professional and career skills
• Look at Summit Platform
• Career education – academic and professional skill development to put yourself on a

trajectory for a living wage

- View of programs like cosmetology is that if there are other pathways that can be pursued, they should be
- Want to put people at a different starting point, i.e., to raise quality of life, raise wages, and attract industry is to increase educational attainment
- Easiest way to measure the effectiveness of programs is to look at educational attainment
- Have "fixated" mostly on associate's degree
- Look to P-TECH for example of process, but not necessarily goals
- Employers are asking the teachers to create activities that encourage not just expertise, but clear communication
- CS4RI is motivated, in part, by the goal to expose students to tech in the K-12 setting, as early as K

- Can start in elementary school, but not necessarily name pathways
- Broaden understanding in middle school through self-exploration
- Thinking entrepreneurially, can start thinking about opportunities
- Recoils a bit at the idea that the purpose of school is a job
- CTE currently results in de facto tracking
- Core content is not being incorporated into CTE
- It should be a re-envisioning of how a program flows, you have to flip how we think about pathways
- The certificate that you get is supposed to be valued by industry
    - To earn this, have to be in three courses
    - RIDE's accountability is supposed to determine the value of the credential, value to the field
- "Pathway" feels different from "a cluster of skills"
    - "Cluster of skills" opens more doors
    - Concerned that "pathway" leads to jobs of tomorrow, not 10 years from now

- Ultimately, RIDE isn't "felt" in the field, meaning that it really isn't more than an legislative body
- Other than CTE, never really saw RIDE do any evaluations

Pathway endorsements (PEs):

- Vision is consistent with career education
- Potentially leaving out those students in the "high-skill, high-demand, high-paying jobs"
- In the new year, will have to start implementing the pathway endorsements

- PEs are about developing the skills necessary to learn deeply
- See vision one-pager (to be provided)
- Statewide criteria
    - Academic – sequencing of courses, at least three
    - Job/career – exploration of the career area
        - Internship
        - Job shadowing
        - Resume workshop
    - Applications – apply to real-world
        - For most, this will be expressed in the senior project
    - Endorsement area, catchalls for all interests
        - Stem
        - Arts
        - Humanities
        - Business
        - Public service
        - Will be able to add others
    - Looking for area-specific skills
- "Seals" just capture proficiency, regardless of going through a program
- "PEs" are programs that result in a "personalized diploma"
    - "The work that they've chosen to do in their study"
- Can naturally meet endorsements by enrolling in the same/similar courses
- Need to take the following courses:
    - 4 math
    - 4 ELA
    - 3 science
    - 3 SS
    - 6 other local-determined, "presumed to include:"
        - Arts (core)
        - Tech (core)
        - World language
        - PE
        - Health

- Now, CE and CR are wrapped up in initiatives – OCCR, secondary regs are "college and career readiness"
- Exploration of careers are beyond CTE
- Never talk about the next generation of educators
    - Still need professors and teachers
- Principals and superintendents
    - Superintendents need to be a part of the effort
    - Principals needs to be on board in order for it to work at the site
    - Might be another person, such as the counselor

- Is using 1:1, blended [Note: This school is exemplary]
  - Chromebooks in every classroom
  - "This is how we do things in the real world"
  - Soft skills aligned to industry needs
  - 1:1 has a domino effect, impact choices and curricula (i.e., no books to buy)
  - "If you can do it electronically, don't print"
- Is making an intentional connection between STEAM and art
- Values SEL – this was apparent
- FRPL = 45%
- Has made an intentional effort to involve parents
- Hires A-types, those with high-tech skills [Note: The faculty is impressive]
- Initially, didn't involve parents
  - Was something of a mistake
  - Now, is reaching out via social media and it's working
- Wants to partner with RIDE to do empowerment, will have "the power of the law" if so
- Local high school isn't doing as much with 1:1

9. What does success look like in CTE in Rhode Island?
   - Program completion
     - Sequential pathway
     - Never one course, typically three or more
   - The attainment of a technical skill credential
     - Industry and nationally recognized credentials
     - No credential for biotechnology
   - Competencies
     - Being able to do something, even without a credential
     - Not codified, so not really valued
   - High school graduation rates
   - Placement
     - Postsecondary
     - Additional training
     - Immediate employment
   - Portability
     - Now, not living where we were born
     - We are much more mobile
10. Problem with industry/business
    - Industry/businesses will ask for a BS/MA/etc.
    - Would be better to ask for competencies
      - Can they work in teams?
      - Are they punctual?

- Need businesses to value competencies over paper

11. Anything else?
    - Brookings report and the GWB 8 aren't the same and are not wholly objective
        - Ask, "Who is asking for these data?"
        - Basically, my "you value what you measure"
    - 25 years ago, no one wanted to tackle this
        - Had many meetings around education as workforce development
        - Now, looking at education because of:
            - The depression of 2007 – went in first, came out last
            - In rebuilding, wanted to see it done in a purposeful way
            - Before Raimondo, no governor really looked at education through a workforce lens
            - CTE was about the only entity that made this kind of focus
            - Following WWII, Vietnam, and the GI, college became the preferred route to a future
            - CTE took a back seat, but was still preparing people for the majority of the workforce
            - This was for everyone – Italians, Greeks, Armenians, blacks – in RI and in Providence
            - "Those kids" stayed in CTE, those that were of color and of lower classes
    - Mine: If a program is engaging, infuse it with the skills that you need
    - Access to technology could be a galvanizing piece, but this isn't happening yet
        - Urban schools don't have this access yet
        - Equitable training of teachers
    - CTE is not valued in the same way as AP
        - Doesn't do anything for GPA
        - Doesn't do anything for the school
        - Consequences of a system that rewards AP
    - Cosmetology is graduating more students than other programs
        - Not going on to more cosmetology, but health
        - The above data aren't readily available and "live" with the person/people that generated it and asked for it
    - Business and industry are strange
        - Talk about investing in the here and the now
        - Want people to be trained for my "right here, right now"
        - "Over the next five years, I need this" – i.e., business and industry will call for employees to have in-the-moment, not durable and portable, skills
            - Later, lay off employees
            - Could be a consequence of a contract
        - Local business and industry need to ante up as well
            - They need to invest in their existing workforces
            - Invest in portable skills
            - Invest in evolving skills
    - There has to be a point where career pathways are separated from tracking
    - Many will talk about the European model

- Excellent workplace learning
- But start tracking at an earlier age

- Saw an alleged disconnect between the corporate world and academia
  - Literacy in business is different
    - Problem solving
    - Construct own knowledge
  - Business and education talk past each other
- Wants to bridge the disconnect between business and education
- Provide opportunities for authentic education
- In education, now talking about competencies in education, while they've been there all along in business
- Standards-based grading – what exactly are we measuring?
  - Finland – "transversal skills"
    - Looking beyond subject and content disciplines
    - Content knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Elementary level – students can:
  - Analyze data
  - Use technical tools
  - Literacy
- If you start at K, you have the articulation
- In traditional comprehensive schools?
  - Align to higher education
  - Currently, would have to go to another school to get the credential
- Honoring and showcasing good work
- Don't align to a district
- Get beyond the district affiliation
  - Conflate quality of the program with the district where it's offered
- Align with (and affiliate with) higher education (in order to be a successful initiative)
  - "This path is parallel to the traditional classroom experience."
  - P-TECH is a model for this, for elevating expectations
  - Would create the expectation that instructor will be able to deliver
- From secondary or postsecondary, need to be as intentional in the teaching of the content as we are with the skills
- Within academia, have created titles and degrees
  - Need to look at the competencies instead of the paper
  - What does it look like to be a graduate of Rhode Island?
    - Poster, infographic, etc.
  - Soft skills need to be firm
- Many of these programs are in protectionist mode
- Part of the pitch to CTE is that "we want to celebrate what you do and want to elevate the status of it"

- Could recast "CTE centers" as "solution centers" (offered by the principal)

- Think of the pre-service teacher when considering PrepareRI Ambassadors
- Mine: Conversation led to the idea of return on investment – How can Ambassadors be selected in a way that gets the greatest amount of representation of the state's current career education realities? What districts/regions are microcosms of the state? This is especially pertinent given that the number of Ambassadors will be 5 – 10 instead of 20 as originally planned.
- Get right on the quid pro quo: By releasing an educator to be an Ambassador, the district will get _____
- "The Pitch" – Show how districts can meet RIDE-/state-issued mandates through more efficient career education
-

- Is working on creating a syllabus around teacher prep, 4 tenets of deeper learning
- Oversaw CTE in PPSD
- Suggested reaching out to XXXXX and XXXXX

- This could be the most exciting time in education
- Nobody knows what it should look like, so keep going until someone says "No"
- At the end of the day, there are certain skills that will be necessary
- "The six Cs" of education - https://infogr.am/the-6-cs-of-education-for-the-21st-century
- In terms of empowerment, do you create a network?
    - For instance, who will lose the funding?
- People aren't opposed to networks, but the realities of things like transportation (with the ACN)
    - When professors go to the schools, all wanted to take college classes
    - Kids don't want to give up two classes to take classes elsewhere
- Has partnered with XXXXX and XXXXX
    - Are talking about CE and CR
    - Asking local manufacturers, "What are you looking for in a XXXXX graduate?"
    - RIDE is asking for certain proficiencies, but manufacturers are looking for something else
- Started internships, XXXXX
- Best story:
    - Student working with East Bay Manufacturing
    - Internship
    - Was taught soft marketing skills
    - Was hired right back and paid for community college
    - That was success
- The last two weeks, upped goal to 25 internships
    - Students will tour businesses

- CEOs interview with students
- Students sign a covenant

- High schools don't have the capacity to realize the pathways expected by RIDE
  - A lot of miscommunication about the targets
  - Looking at PLTW
  - Sequence of three courses
  - The requirements for the secondary regs make it hard to realize sequences and pathways
  - Just don't have enough human capacity and funds to realize this
  - Not offering some courses (like welding) since not financially possible
- Protection and safety?
  - RIDE needs to build trust
  - Lack of trust since what's being communicated keeps changing
  - Can you name the non-negotiables that we can all aspire to?
  - RIDE gets different message – some superintendents want leeway, some want to be told what to do
    - Loose/tight

12. How can CE and CR be a statewide effort?
    - What are the supports for the cohort of 20?
      - Will they be released?
      - The school of
    - Took the counselors to the jobs
      - They're academic counselors, not career counselors
    - Get RIDE, CTE, DLT, GWB
      - Go on bus tours
    - How is everything related? Is RIDE clear in its message?

13. Anything else?
    - At the end of the day, it is the network
    - How do we go from pilots to scale?
    - Revenue neutral – do more without changing the budget

14. K - 8?
    - XXXXX, have career day at the middle school
      - "Parents and children can come in and play with the company's toys
    - Creating a network for businesses to communicate with each other
      - Just don't know what's going on?
      - Don't have these big partners everywhere, like EB
      - Have mom-and-pop, multimillion companies in the area
    - Half the residents don't realize what's in there backyard
    - XXXXX – huge building, educators and parents don't know what happens inside
    - The parents and teachers don't know what's happening

- Need to get right on the funding formula, since funding affects relationships and trust
- Year 1 should be about cohesion – How does a comprehensive high school fit into the CTE landscape?

- Flexible program models:
  - Are the programs based on competency or seat time? (Is this even an issue in a state without Carnegie units?)
  - Can they accommodate the student's interests, above and beyond the focus of the program?
- Who is actually brokering the relationship between industry and schools? Mine: Good question.
- Ambassadors could offer technical assistance and facilitate "dreaming together"
- Want to build a culture of innovation
- Who the industry partner is matters – IBM has more gravitas than a mom & pop shop

- 4th year in XXXXX
  - Now considered part of the urban ring
  - Having issues with cultural disconnect between faculty students
- Behind XXXXX in terms of tech
  - Planning to go 1:1 next year

- Two years received a foundation grant for marine studies
  - Interdisciplinary team
  - Students build boats
  - Core contents reflects maritime
  - Two year program
- Classes are full, have been opened to other middle school in the district
- All populations are welcome
- At the high school, have a CTE-type structure that is maritime themed
  - Have yet to confer a certificate
  - When the teacher that was spearheading this endeavor left, program stalled
- Have a steering committee that includes EB

Mine: Look at BEP as a lever.
Mine: District expressions first, then link on a state level

- Made me think about the following:
  - Need to get right on what SBCs do, where they physically spend most of their time, what their responsibilities are, etc.
  - Do SBCs have a typical day?
  - Who's the visionary in the relationship – superintendent, principal, etc.? Who does the implementation?
  - Would an induction coach be a good Ambassador?
  - To what extent can you pay for an SBC out of Perkins funding? How many SBCs are part-time, full-time, serve multiple schools, etc.?

- XXXXX
  - Decides curriculum

- NGSS
- Depends on the educator
  - Might model for teacher
  - Might develop lesson
- New role for teachers
- Creating trust
  - Part of it is credentials – XXXXX
  - XXXXX
  - Looking at bigger picture
  - Teachers/clientele are not strong in science
  - Getting people to collaborate – strong PLCs
    - Go over methods
    - Lab classroom
    - Important to have collegial culture
    - "School needs to set aside time."

- NGSS and CCSS are almost too much
  - Mine: Working harder, not smarter
  - EE: It will take time for a *team* to change culture
  - "Need to have a clear plan."
  - Principals have passion projects
- XXXXX
  - Bring in people from the environment to appreciate the environment
  - If there were more time, could make greater connections
  - Raytheon employees had to take own comp time to visit schools

- Need to make sure RIDE is ready to support teachers
- What will RIDE do given certain contingencies – funding for students to attend other CTE centers, time in students' schedules to take advantage of opportunities, etc.
- Name what Ambassadors are going to do
  - Part of the PrepareRI plan, not implementing the plan
  - Need to be people that are super excited about it
  - Teacher/Superintendent/Principal/Student
    - Make the student the center
    - "Too many cooks in the kitchen. What is your lane?"
  - "Put on paper the roles for each of these players. We want to empower you, but what does that mean?"
  - Unified message
    - Different for employers
      - You can now be involved – we're giving you money to speak to teachers
      - RJRI for youth - $700K
  - "What do they get out of it more than just a stipend?"
  - "Ambassadors have to own the need."
    - Ask the questions and see who responds

        - Pawtucket, Woonsocket, PVD, CF, etc.
        - River's Edge
        - Sherry – summer youth
- From a workforce perspective, make everything clear
    - In a year, what will the Ambassadors have accomplished
    - Highlighted CTE and P-TECH – "Take components of what's work"
        - The state is providing funding and resources
        - Convening opportunities
            - CTE Board and Trust
            - RJRI
- XXXXX
    - "Get them in a lane – otherwise, superintendents will want to take it over."
- Career Advisory Committee, etc.
    - Mine: This might already exist within the GWB, but there needs to be body of owner's of various parts of the Action Plan that meets regularly to discuss progress and to recalibrate for consistency when necessary

- Can't get a certification from "career innovation programs"
- RIDE owned centers until about 4 years ago (gave last center back a year ago)
- RI gets ~$5M/yr
- SBC salaries range from $15K - $50K/yr
- What relationships have resulted from the funding of CTE?
    - Agrees with the "black box" of CTE funding
    - XXXXX
    - Mine:
        - Competition
        - Informal consortia
    - "Supplanting in a huge way"
        - Salaries of the SBCs
        - This is why there might be the recommendation to cut the SBC for the benefit of the program
    - XXXXX
    - One district charged a flat fee, which created animosity
- How do you "feel" the work of an SBC?
    - Professional development
    - Changes and improvement in programs
    - Using PLTW

- There would be value in discussions between elementary schools and middle schools
    - XXXXX position allows for this type of "cross-pollination"
    - Have different levels of teachers in the same room (e.g., middle school/high

school algebra 1 teachers)
- Have a strong XXXXX culture (at the comprehensive high school)
- Have XXXXX
  - Looked at NGSS engineering strand
  - Created articulation and alignment with high school expectations
  - "Science is a natural lens for careers"

- Vocational ed and Perkins funding was specifically for "those kids"
- People are still of the same mindset
- This mentality limits CTE
- We talk about career exposure/awareness/experience
  - Need to start in elementary schools
  - Continue in middle schools
- CTE directors are granted/are supposed to have access to middle schools and high schools in their regions
  - Not having access results in the student not knowing his or her options
  - The remedy might be for the state to pay for out-of-region/district tuition
- Starts with career awareness and career exploration
- By 9th grade, student should have an idea of what they want to be
- System needs to convey entry-level employment skills
- Might need to look at counselors as gatekeepers to access and exposure
  - This might be a matter of educating counselors
  - Counselors need to get over the mindsets of, e.g., AP students don't take CTE

- Programs should lead to industry-recognized certifications
  - Must be issued by an association
  - Must be vendor-neutral (unless the vendor is *the* authority, like CISCO)
  - The curriculum must exist to get the certificate (my impression was that this curriculum is national)
  - The certificate has to be portable
  - There are other certificates that can be earned, but they might not meet the above criteria
  - Is this a place where RIDE could help "clean up" the system?

- SBCs need both authority (i.e., power and trust) and resources (i.e., funding and time) SBC can serve as Ambassadors

- Existing SBC meeting message that someone at RIDE cares
- Already have surveys that could be used going forward
- These meetings could serve as forums within which Ambassadors can get a sense of the field
- Mine:
  - Value SBCs by playing up K – 8's need for a "target" and that they have CTE expertise

- Working with K – 8 educators could result in a more educated "workforce" that needs less remediation

- Mine: Funding is a reflection of the local understanding/misunderstanding of the formula
- Mine: How is the data system complicating the funding issue?
- CTE regions and transportation regions don't match
- Aside from the Davies region, which are FTEs, SBCs are PTEs, usually retired educators, working 10 – 20 hours/wk
- Funding is through Perkins; how aggressive the superintendent/principal is at the Perkins meeting dictates the SBC salary
- SBC can't do anything other than CTE work – for instance, serving as a substitute would be considered supplanting
- SBCs are non-unionized

Mine: Per funding formula, 65% of Perkins dollars must go to "programs of study," leaving 35% to go to other costs, including SBC salaries. In practice, these percentages might be reversed, but no one has said anything to the contrary.

- Based on the "Summary of Job Responsibilities," can get principals to remember/see the value of SBC and to remember what the SBCs duties really are:
  - Assist the school with the integration of career/contextual learning by accessing and providing information, materials, resources and expertise about career/contextual learning programs, projects, professional development, and special events.
  - Promote and support *Rhode Island's state academic standards* in shaping career/contextual learning by identifying what all learners should know and be able to do to meet the challenges ahead.
  - Create opportunities for faculty, staff and administrators to gain knowledge about Rhode Island's businesses and industries and the career clusters in order to provide meaningful teaching and learning experiences.
- The above three responsibilities could be leveraged to empower SBCs through meaningful discourse with the principals, their direct superiors
- NSFY grant provides an entry point into a discussion with SBCs

When it comes to SBCs and Ambassadors, it will be important to message what the work is, who will do the work, and how that work will be of value to the community.

- There is a need for educator externships
  - Used to exist
  - 20 – 30 educators as part of an "I-plan"
  - Need to compensate people (possibly with a stipend) if they don't need the credits
  - Could be a week or two during the summer

- XXXXX
- XXXXX
- Is able to connect with students
- Has been at this for 13 years and has developed a rapport with the community

- Sees a benefit at having an office at the site → the value of location
- School has a van that allows CTE teachers to drive students to worksites
- Juniors and seniors can drive themselves
- Sees a benefit in starting something like WayToGo earlier in the school career (say, K-3 instead of 11th grade)

- Feedback from former students is that they were prepared academically, but lacked exposure to careers
- Offers juniors the opportunity to do job shadowing
- Seniors get to attend a career fair at the school
- Is empowered by:
    - Intrinsic motivation
    - A receptive administration
- Wonders if RIDE knows the value of SBCs
    - Gets at XXXXX idea that SBCs' need to be "empowered and to have resources"
    - Mine: Who isn't doing the valuing? Is it possible that SBCs are valued locally, but not universally?
    - Was aware of Industry Field Coordinators (IFCs), a former role that should not be confused with the Ambassadors

View of SBC role?

- Interpreted differently by different people
- XXXXX
- Realizes that clarity is needed around the role
- Lack of consistency of SBC role
- Lack of communication between SBCs and RIDE
- Some schools match SBCs to need
- XXXXX, promotes rigorous programs
- Sees a need for internships
- Sees value in a portable skill set
- Rolling out PLTW pre-engineering
- At times, there's confusion as to when something should be funded by Perkins or categorical funds
- There's a need for someone whose sole job is to interact with students (mine: a need to surface student voice)
- Part-time
- Agrees that CTE, in general, can be satisficed, but not necessarily resolved

- CTE is becoming more meaningful in the state
- It used to be that schools were happy to get rid of "those kids"
- Now, the paradigm has flipped, where sending schools see it as "they're taking our money"
    - This is, in part, a funding issue
    - This speaks well of the program that is attracting students from other schools/districts
    - "More communities will be listening to CTEs." → Mine: Parents will seek out quality CTE programs
- "It's all about a good team. Sometimes people [like principals and superintendents] will 'inherit' an SBC." → Mine: A relationship has to be developed and not inherited
- Mine: There would be value in establishing those features that are critical to the work of SBCs and then create measures accordingly to see how SBCs are performing
- "It's not about getting tuition. It's about providing excellent education." → Mine: Funding and competition get in the way of a true statewide system that offers all student choice among CTE programs

- SBC experiences are different depending if he/she is at a CTE center or a comprehensive high school
- The success of an SBC depends on the relationship with the administration
- Since RIDE has embarked on evaluating all programs, SBCs are drawn into the work → Mine: Could this be leveraged?
- Need K-8 career education awareness
- XXXXX
- What currently empowers you?
    - Intrinsic motivation – believes in CTE
    - Also believes that "We need to prepare kids to survive after high school."

Appendix G: PrepareRI Ambassadors – Application

PrepareRI Ambassadors – Application

Annually, applications will be solicited for up to 10 PrepareRI Ambassadors. The Ambassadors will be recruited from throughout the education sector, including: K-12 general education teachers; career and technical education teachers; K-12 school counselors; a principal from a comprehensive high school; a superintendent from a comprehensive school district; postsecondary educators; and parents of current K-12 students. The first cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors will be named in March 2017. Ambassadors will be paid a stipend of $5,000 for a period of service from April 2017 to June 2018.

The window for the application process **opens Monday, January 30, 2017, and closes on Friday, March 3, 2017.** This application can be found at:
http://www.ride.ri.gov/PrepareRIAmbassadors/Application.aspx

Applications are due March 3, 2017. Please submit this application, the application project proposal (two-page maximum), a résumé (two-page maximum), and up to three references with contact information to PrepareRIAmbassadors@ride.ri.gov.

Questions regarding either the program or the application may be directed to
PrepareRIAmbassadors@ride.ri.gov

I. Personal Information

Name: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Organization: _____ Position: _____

II. Application Project Proposal

In two pages or less, please submit a project proposal to address one of the five career readiness areas of need listed below. Proposals should include practical, achievable yet bold ideas that will help Rhode Island achieve the goals of the Action Plan. If chosen to serve as a PrepareRI Ambassador, your tenure will focus on developing resources and toolkits that will be used by educators statewide.

III. Areas of Interest

Each PrepareRI Ambassador will be required to develop resources and toolkits to support fellow educators that contribute to a growing body of knowledge of career education in Rhode Island. Ideally, the capstone will not only serve a practical purpose, but will also allow the Ambassador to research and better understand a particular area of interest. The inaugural cohort of PrepareRI Ambassadors will explore five specific areas of career education in depth.

Please rank the following career readiness areas of need in order of interest (1 through 5, with "1" indicating greatest interest and "5" indicating least interest):

_____ **Employer engagement.** Statewide structures for convening K-12, postsecondary, employer, and workforce development communities have been statutorily formalized, but have yet to be consistently leveraged to identify high-skill, high demand sectors. There is a need to identify and align the skills and competencies required of the current labor market and to make those skills and competencies known throughout the state. There is also a need to assess and adjust skills and competencies on an ongoing basis in response to an evolving labor market.

_____ **Rigor and quality in career pathways for ALL students.** Currently, access both to flexible career pathways and to career awareness and exposure are limited to existing career and technical education (CTE) programs. While technically available to all students, logistical barriers, such as transportation and program quality, impede or restrict equitable enrollment in CTE courses and centers, especially for low-income students and students of color. There is a need to make high-quality career pathways available to *all* students.

_____ **Career-focused accountability systems.** The state has not yet incorporated career-focused indicators into its K-12 accountably system. The indicators that have been measured have been restricted only to those students who have completed CTE pathways, limiting the scope and degree of those measurements and value of consequent data. There is a need for career-focused indicators to apply to all students, which will allow data to be reviewed for equity and to drive the recognition and celebration of secondary students who demonstrated career readiness, regardless of program.

_____ **Scaled pathways that culminate in credentials of value.** As suggested above, current career pathways are largely limited to CTE students and vary in quality and degree of equity. In addition to making career pathways available to all, there is a need to develop effective career guidance systems to assist students in making sound, well-informed decisions about course and pathway participation. There is also a need to identify potential and existing pathways that are outside of CTE but result either in career readiness or postsecondary credentials of value.

_____ **Ensure cross-institutional alignment.** Rhode Island is developing a career education delivery system that is aligned with current and projected needs of the labor market. A crucial step in achieving this alignment is increasing career awareness and exploration in all schools, especially at the elementary and secondary levels. There is a need to expand the analysis of demographic information and outcome data, which are significantly limited, beyond the small population that currently receives pathway programming. This expanded analysis will help identify more flexible career education delivery models, which, it is hoped, will drive increases in the participation in pathways that are aligned with labor market needs.

IV. Confirmation of Commitment

Serving as a PrepareRI Ambassador is not only a worthwhile endeavor, but also a significant commitment. Below, you are asked to consider what being a PrepareRI Ambassador entails and to make a commitment in light of that consideration.

For the inaugural cohort, serving as a PrepareRI Ambassador is a fifteen-month commitment – April 2017 to June 2018 – requiring attendance at all meetings, including the initial orientation, check-ins, professional development opportunities, and PrepareRI Summits.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

The main deliverable of the PrepareRI Ambassador program is the development resources and toolkits to support fellow educators that contribute to a growing body of knowledge of career education in Rhode Island.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

PrepareRI Ambassadors will help develop and share career education best practices with educators throughout the state. Ambassadors will also contribute to the creation and coordination of career education professional development opportunities for the benefit of their peers.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

PrepareRI Ambassadors will serve as champions of career education during and beyond their tenures.

_____ **By initialing, I acknowledge that I understand this commitment**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H: PrepareRI Ambassador Applicant Questions

PrepareRI Ambassador Applicant Questions

1. **Can you tell me a little more about your current position?**

2. **PrepareRI Ambassadors will be tasked with working to improve career preparation systems across the state. How might your current role complement that work?**

3. **Do you have an opinion of current career preparation systems or of career education in general? What do you think needs to be improved?**

4. **Can you give some examples of when you have successfully teamed or collaborated with others to achieve a common goal? What made that teaming or collaboration successful?**

5. **PrepareRI Ambassadors will deliver either a research-based capstone, a field-facing toolkit, or some other resource to be used by school- and district-level educators. How can we ensure that those resources have statewide reach as opposed to just local applicability?**

6. **In addition to statewide reach, career preparation systems need to serve students of all levels K-12. How do you see the work of PrepareRI Ambassadors accomplishing this?**

7. **Do you possess other skills not found on your résumé that you would like to share (adept at PowerPoint, accomplished in terms of website design, familiar with G Suite, etc.)?**

8. **Any other comments or questions?**

Appendix I: Inaugural PrepareRI Ambassador Cohort Introduction_Brief

The PrepareRI Initiative

Prepare Rhode Island (PrepareRI) is a commitment by the State of Rhode Island to improve the career readiness and postsecondary attainment of all Rhode Island youth to prepare them with the skills they need for jobs that pay. Too many students are graduating from high school unprepared and too many employers are struggling to fill vacancies. Currently, less than 45% of Rhode Islanders have a postsecondary degree or industry-recognized certificate, yet 70% of jobs in the coming years will require it. Rhode Island faces a critical skills gap that, unless addressed, will continue to leave high-skill, high-demand jobs unfilled. At a time when our economy needs more highly-educated workers with transferable sets of skills, we need to respond.

PrepareRI Ambassadors

PrepareRI Ambassadors will be an integral part of ensuring Rhode Island develops a career education system that responds to and addresses this skills gap. PrepareRI Ambassadors are a cohort of educator leaders from across Rhode Island that serve in a variety of roles and are unified around the goal of career readiness for *all* students. The inaugural cohort of Ambassadors includes teachers, a counselor, a school-based coordinator, an administrator, and a district-level director representing traditional public schools, career and technical education schools and a charter public school. PrepareRI Ambassadors will lead professional development as a part of the inaugural PrepareRI Summits, which will bring together key career education stakeholders throughout the school year. They will also develop and inform policy recommendations to support the expansion of career education efforts.

Reimagining Career Education for All

PrepareRI Ambassadors will work closely with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and will focus on helping Rhode Island's educators accomplish the goals established in the PrepareRI Action Plan. Deeply rooted in the belief that educators closest to children know best how to help them reach their full potential, the Ambassadors will develop resources and toolkits that will support their peers in the field. Ultimately, the Ambassadors' efforts will reimagine career education for all of Rhode Island's students.