



# WORK IMMERSION PROGRAM GUIDE



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## Governor's Workforce Board

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## **OVERVIEW**

Work Immersion is an internship support program available to Rhode Island employers. It was established pursuant to Rhode Island General Law § 42-102-11 and is designed to boost the employment prospects of new and returning workers (i.e., eligible students and unemployed or underemployed adults) through meaningful paid work experiences.

The program is administered by the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) and provides a 50% or 75% reimbursement for wages paid to eligible participants.

All Rhode Island employers who meet the eligibility requirements outlined in this guide may apply.

## **KEY TERMS**

For the purposes of this program the following definitions apply:

- **Work Immersion/Internship** – a temporary, paid work experience that provides a meaningful learning opportunity and increases the employability of the participant.
- **Employer** – An entity, company or organization entering into agreement with the Governor's Workforce Board to provide a work experience and pay wages to participant(s).
- **Participant** – An individual – High School Student, College Student or Unemployed Adult – that is hired by the employer to participate in the Work Immersion/Internship experience.

## **ELIGIBLE EMPLOYERS**

Employers must meet three (3) eligibility requirements to participate in the program:

- 1) Classified as a for-profit or private non-profit entity doing business in Rhode Island (public/government entities are not eligible).
- 2) In good standing with the Rhode Island Division of Taxation, all divisions of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and not prohibited from contracting with an agency that administers federal funds.
- 3) Registered in the Ocean State Procures system ('OSP'). **If the employer is not currently registered with OSP, registration must be completed and approved prior to applying for Work Immersion.**
  - **NOTE:** Ocean State Procures is a NEW supplier management system. Accounts did not automatically transfer from the previous RIFANS system so applicants must register with Ocean State Procures even if they had a previous RIFANS registration.

Please visit the [Vendor Self Registration Guide](#) or [click here](#) to be directed to the OSP application. For assistance, please contact [WebProcure.Support@perfect.com](mailto:WebProcure.Support@perfect.com) or call 1(866)889-8533.

## **REIMBURSEMENT RATES & PROGRAM CAPS**

Employers who meet the eligibility criteria outlined above and have 25 or more employees may be reimbursed at a rate of 50% for participant wages paid as outlined in this guide. Eligible employers with fewer than 25 employees may be reimbursed at a higher rate of 75%.

**The wage rate paid to participants must be at least \$15.00 per hour.** If the wage rate is more than \$20.00 per hour, the GWB will calculate reimbursements as if the wage rate is \$20.

To qualify for the program, work experiences must meet the quality guidelines outlined in this guide and provide a minimum of 80 hours of work to each participant.

**The maximum number of reimbursable hours for each participant is 400 hours.**

**Employers are limited to five (5) Work Immersion participants each calendar year.**

## **ELIGIBLE COSTS**

**The GWB only reimburses participant wages for “regular” hours worked up to 40 hours per week.**

The following costs are **NOT** reimbursable:

- Fringe benefits
- Overtime pay
- Vacation pay
- Sick pay
- Holiday pay
- Workers Compensation

## **ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS**

Employers may utilize this program to provide work experience to the following participants:

**Students<sup>1</sup>** – To be eligible for Work Immersion as a student, an individual must be:

- A Rhode Island resident attending any school or a non-Rhode Island resident who is attending a secondary or postsecondary school or training program located in Rhode Island at the time of participation in the program, or who graduated from a school or training program located in Rhode Island within the past six (6) months; and,
- Authorized to work in the United States.

**Unemployed or Underemployed Adults** – To be eligible for Work Immersion as an unemployed or underemployed adult, an individual must be:

- A Rhode Island resident;
- At least 18 years of age;
- Authorized to work in the United States;
- **Unemployed** (either collecting Unemployment Insurance benefits or not receiving wages prior to participating in the work experience); or,
- **Underemployed** (not having enough paid work or not doing work that makes full use of their skills and abilities); and,
- New to the employer.

Employers may **NOT** utilize this program to provide work experience to participants who are:

- Existing employees (participants must be **new hires<sup>2</sup>**)
- **Immediate relatives<sup>3</sup>** of the employer
- Hired as independent contractors under a 1099

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<sup>1</sup> All students must be of legal age and legally authorized to work. Please see the [Rhode Island Child Labor Guide](#).

<sup>2</sup> A **new hire** is defined as an employee with whom the company has had no prior employee relationship. When submitting for reimbursement, if paystubs or timecards show that the participant worked for the employer more than 28 days prior to the start of the contract, the contract shall be considered null and void.

<sup>3</sup> An **immediate relative** is defined as an individual in a person’s family such as a spouse, parent, grandparent, child, sibling, in-law, or domestic partner.



## **WORK EXPERIENCE/INTERNSHIP QUALITY**

All work experiences should provide a meaningful learning opportunity and impact the participant such that they gain skills or experience that will further their career. The GWB defines a high-quality work experience/internship as:

- **Rigorous** – allows the participant to gain and/or improve upon their technical and professional skills and demonstrate mastery of those skills
- **Relevant** – connects to the participant’s interests and to the real world of work
- **Reflective** – engages the participant in meaningful evaluations from supervisors and industry professionals
- **Interactive** – provides multiple and extended opportunities for the participant to interact with and learn from industry professionals
- **Integrated** – in the case of a student participant; relates to their field of study

The work experience must provide a **minimum of 80 hours** of work to each participant.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Before a work experience can begin, an application must be submitted by the employer and approved by GWB staff. The Work Immersion application is available online at [www.gwb.ri.gov](http://www.gwb.ri.gov) and can be submitted at any time. Applications are currently accepted online only.

When an application is successfully submitted, the applicant will receive an email confirmation. This is the employer’s receipt and counts as proof that the application was submitted. If you do not receive an email confirmation after applying, please contact the GWB within 24 hours for assistance.

Applications are typically processed within seven (7) days of receipt. Each submission is reviewed by GWB staff for accuracy and to determine eligibility. If any issues are identified in the application, the point of contact listed on the application will be notified.

## **AWARD PROCESS**

After an application is reviewed and approved, the employer will receive a contract for review and signature. Once signed by both the employer and the GWB, the employer will receive a copy of the contract. While the work experience may start any time after an application is submitted, the GWB cannot provide reimbursement for any time worked/costs incurred prior to the start date on the contract.

## **APPLICATION DENIALS**

Applications will be denied if the information provided by the employer is deemed to be inaccurate or if the request does not meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this guide. Employers will be notified via e-mail if their application is denied. The e-mail will contain the reason for the denial and instructions for filing an appeal.

## **APPEAL PROCESS FOR DENIED APPLICATIONS**

Denied applications may be appealed by writing to the Executive Director of the Governor's Workforce Board within two weeks (10 business days) of the notification of denial. Appeals may be sent via mail or via e-mail to [dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov) and addressed to:

Executive Director  
Governor's Workforce Board  
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training  
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Building 73-1  
Cranston, RI 02920

The appeal must include the name and contact information for the employer representative (please include a mailing address and phone number) and a description of the issue.

The Executive Director will issue a decision within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal.

## **REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS**

All payments in the Work Immersion Program are made on a cost reimbursement basis in which the employer pays the participant's wages up front and requests reimbursement at the conclusion of the contract performance period. At the conclusion of the contract performance period, the employer is required to submit the Work Immersion Request for Reimbursement Form and evidence of wages paid to [dlt.invoice@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:dlt.invoice@dlt.ri.gov) within sixty (60) days.

**If proper documentation is not received within sixty (60) days of the conclusion of the contract performance period, the reimbursement will not be processed, and the contract will be closed.**

**NOTE:** Employers may choose to retain participants at the conclusion of the contract performance period; however, reimbursement will only be provided for hours and wages worked during the contract performance period and up to the program/contract caps.

The following items are required to request reimbursement:

### **1. Work Immersion Request for Reimbursement Form**

At the time of award, employers will receive a copy of the Work Immersion Request for Reimbursement Form. It may also be downloaded from the GWB website [www.gwb.ri.gov](http://www.gwb.ri.gov). The form must be completed with the following information:

- Contract Number
- Employer Name
- Participant Name
- Last Four (4) Digits of the Participant's Social Security Number
- Participant's Hourly Rate of Pay
- Total Hours Worked by the Participant (during the contract performance period)

### **2. Supporting Documentation (Evidence of Wages Paid)**

The following types of documents may be submitted as verification of wages paid:

- The participant's paystubs for each week they worked within the contract dates; or
- The participant's timecards and canceled/processed checks that verify the participant was paid; or

- Company payroll registers that show the participant's hours worked and rate of pay for each pay period within the contract dates.

**Supporting documents must identify:**

- The participant's first and last name
- The dates of the pay period
- The hourly rate of pay
- The number of hours worked within the pay period

**NOTE:** Year to date payroll records are not accepted.

If any of the above items are not present or are incorrect, the Governor's Workforce Board will deny the request for payment and outline the reason for denial. The Employer will have ten (10) business days to rectify any issues and resubmit for payment.

### **CHECKING REIMBURSEMENT STATUS**

Payments will be issued within 30 days of receipt of the Request for Reimbursement Form and supporting documentation. Employers may check [RIPAY](#) for detailed payment information.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

GWB Staff is available to provide technical assistance throughout the entire grant process. For assistance, please call (401) 462-8860 or e-mail [dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:dlt.gwbinfo@dlt.ri.gov).



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