

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/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Educational-Programming/PrepareRI/TeacherLeaderApplicationForm.pdf>

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 accountability 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: _____