

# Economic Growth Plan 2009

*Rhode Island, Working Again*

*Review and Report*

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## *Rhode Island, Working Again*

### Review and Report

The national economic crisis has hit Rhode Island harder than most states, necessitating a rebuilding year in 2009. This prompted the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation to realign its core programs and initiatives in response to the changing conditions. Since the release of its 2009 Economic Growth Plan, RIEDC has built on and developed the concrete action items proposed in the plan to rebuild and reinvigorate Rhode Island's economy. RIEDC's mission is clear — we aim to create jobs, help Rhode Island companies expand and develop their workforce and identify opportunities to bring new companies into our state. We do this through a variety of programs that are focused on fulfilling the mission of the RIEDC to get Rhode Island Working Again.



Rhode Island  
Economic Development Corporation



Deepwater Wind installed a temporary meteorological mast near Great Salt Pond on Block Island, R.I., as part of its comprehensive wind-resources study of the area of its proposed offshore wind farm. Photo Courtesy of Deepwater Wind

Our 2009 Growth Plan presented concrete action aimed at accelerating the pace of job growth in our state. The plan placed a high priority on small business, renewable energy and the green economy, science and technology research, workforce development, site selection and entrepreneurial support.

Staying on strategy through economic challenges has required strong leadership and seamless collaboration. Our plan is starting to work. Important partnerships have been formed and fostered. Research activity has been increased. Industry growth has accelerated. Small businesses are tapping into a widening plethora of services.

RIEDC has completed a comprehensive review of its activities since the release of its 2009 Economic Growth Plan. Central to this review are details surrounding the ongoing efforts of the plan and new initiatives to get **Rhode Island Working Again**.

## Renewable Energy And The Green Economy

Rhode Island stands to gain significant benefits from investing in renewable energy projects that will create long-term job growth opportunities in Rhode Island's green technology and green energy industries. In 2009, RIEDC leveraged its Renewable Energy Fund (REF) and the Deepwater Wind project to bolster the state's renewable energy capabilities.

### The Renewable Energy Fund

In June, the REF awarded a total of \$681,875 in grants to 17 local projects that will stimulate job growth in the green technology and green energy sectors of Rhode Island's economy. REF is poised to award more than \$1 million in grants and low-interest loans to six Rhode Island businesses in September. The awards support wind, solar PV, solar hot water and hydropower projects that will produce electricity in a more clean and sustainable manner.

### Green Economy

RIEDC recognizes the importance of the green economy to the state. It's imperative that Rhode Island seize the current green economy opportunities, bring together invested stakeholders and build a cohesive plan to further develop a viable industry with new green jobs for all and increase the sustainable job force.

On June 26, RIEDC, Governor Carcieri, House Speaker William J. Murphy and Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed hosted the Green Economy Roundtable, aimed at identifying the state's unique green economic opportunities and accelerating green-sector job growth.

The working session brought together more than 120 leaders in the green sector — from environmentalists to developers, government leaders to educators — who collaborated on defining a roadmap for Rhode Island's green economy and advancing green-sector job



Attendees at the RIEDC's Green Economy Roundtable at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick, "vote" on suggestions posted on the wall following the table discussions. Photo by Bill Murphy



Deepwater Wind installed a temporary avian radar system near Southeast Light on Block Island, R.I., to monitor bird activity in the area, as part of the company's ongoing environmental studies for its proposed offshore wind farm. Photo Courtesy of Deepwater Wind

growth. Attendees were divided into different "working groups" and tasked with determining a strategic action plan to accelerate growth in the green economy.

Participants evaluated Rhode Island's unique assets and determined five growth opportunities that will drive forth the green economy and increase jobs:

1. Energy efficiency
2. Manufacturing
3. Policy
4. R&D and innovation
5. Wind

Following the event, RIEDC has been working to create a council that will play a critical role in the development of Rhode Island's green economy. The group, called the Rhode Island Green Economy Network, will unveil a strategic roadmap incorporating the five growth opportunities at its first meeting in December 2009.

## Offshore Wind

The Deepwater Wind energy project off the coast of Rhode Island has made great progress in 2009. While wind projects have stalled in other states, Rhode Island has taken steps that will ensure the success of Deepwater's two proposed wind farms.

- » The Quonset Development Corporation approved a development agreement in June to lease three parcels, for a total of 117 acres, to Deepwater Wind for the development of the company's regional manufacturing facility and its regional development headquarters. When

fully operational, the headquarters will support 800 jobs, with annual wages of \$60 million.

- » In May, Deepwater Wind opened development offices in Providence and on Block Island.
- » The Special Area Management Plan (SAMP), a comprehensive ocean-mapping project that will help select sites for the wind farms, is in full swing and is expected to be completed next year. REF is funding the SAMP.
- » Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Council issued permits in July to Deepwater Wind to install a meteorological tower and other equipment on Block Island and in nearby waters to collect weather data for the company's proposed offshore wind farms.
- » In June, Governor Carcieri kicked off RIEDC's Green Economy Roundtable, aimed at identifying the state's unique green economic opportunities and accelerating green-sector job growth, by signing groundbreaking legislation that requires the state's largest electric utility to enter into long-term contracts to purchase power from renewable energy producers in Rhode Island.

The Deepwater Wind project represents more than just 15 percent of the state's electricity demand. By establishing itself as an early leader in offshore wind production, Rhode Island stands to establish a new industry in Rhode Island — a high-wage industry with long-term growth potential.

## Science and Technology Research

### Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council

The Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) named David M. Farmer, PhD, FRS, FRSC, Dean of the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island, as the new co-chair of the council in June. Farmer brings to STAC a lifetime of experience in scientific research and study.

Governor Carcieri also announced other appointments to the STAC Board: Timothy J. Babineau, MD, president and chief executive officer of Rhode Island Hospital and Pierre Joseph Corriveau, PhD, senior scientific technical officer and chief technology officer for Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC). A critical component to the success of STAC is to bring together voices from different growth industries, including healthcare and military, to cut across traditional boundaries. Drs. Farmer, Babineau and Corriveau are well suited to support STAC initiatives that drive economic development and job creation by maximizing the economic impact of research, technology and innovation.

Aiming to draw attention to federally-funded research opportunities for Rhode Islanders, STAC launched a comprehensive searchable database for federal funding opportunities in April. The new section on STAC's website provides daily updates and news alerts on federally funded research opportunities.

The website, which STAC shares and operates in cooperation with Rhode Island National Science Foundation's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), provides a searchable database of emerging federal funding opportunities to assist Rhode Island researchers in tracking and applying for \$21.5 billion in competitive stimulus R&D funding being offered by federal agencies. News updates on how and when funding will be distributed are listed daily.

## Workforce Development

### Community College of Rhode Island 21st Century Workforce Commission

In an effort to better align Rhode Island's workforce development programs with the state's strategy for



Governor Carcieri with Guest Speaker from IBM, Nicholas Bowen, who partnered with Brown University.

growing jobs in high-wage, innovation economy industries, the Community College of Rhode Island 21st Century Workforce Commission is on target to identify ways the school can position itself to train workers for new jobs in a knowledge-based economy.

So far, the commission has held three public meetings and two focus groups. Among many issues, the commission has focused on the demands of a high-wage knowledge economy and has reviewed similar projects in Ohio and Virginia. The commission reviewed material and heard presentations that demonstrated how those states approached their workforce challenges, including the initiatives they developed to prepare individuals for their first jobs as well as retrain them for new jobs as skill requirements evolve.

The commission is currently working with the Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) — one of the nation's most experienced nonprofits working to make education and workforce development more responsive to the economy — to report its findings and recommendations to Governor Carcieri and the Rhode Island General Assembly by July 1, 2010.

## Site Selection

### Site Readiness Plan

In order to assure that Rhode Island can meet its long term real estate needs, RIEDC retained Moran, Stahl and Boyer to develop the "Statewide Strategic Plan for Office and Industrial Site Development." The key objectives of the plan are:

- » Define the real estate needs for each of the state's economic growth segments.
- » Identify the optimum locations within the state for

future development to support economic growth.

- » Determine any issues and challenges in supplying real estate (sites or buildings) at the level of readiness required by each economic growth segment.
- » Provide overall observations and recommendations to enhance the long-term real estate needs of Rhode Island.

Identifying real estate options is an essential building block to any successful economic development strategy. As this report is rolled out in late fall, RIEDC will work with regional and local leaders to integrate the final plan into statewide marketing and attraction efforts

### **I-195 Relocation Project**

In September, RIEDC, in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the Office of Governor Donald L. Carcieri, and the City of Providence, released the “Rhode Island Interstate 195 Relocation Surplus Land: Redevelopment and Marketing Analysis.” This report builds on plans for the land that will be opened up once the old I-195 is removed as part of the Iway project.

Produced by Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, the report makes recommendations for redevelopment of the parcels of land that transform Providence and its riverfront. These parcels comprise 36 acres of new land in the Jewelry District, Old Harbor, Fox Point, and College Hill on either side of the Providence River north of the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier.

The report highlights three main objectives that will come from the re-use of the land: an increased tax base, economic development which will attract industries and jobs to the area, and urban revitalization. This will include waterfront access, park land, and a reconnection of old neighborhoods that were once sliced apart but will now come together again once the construction of the Iway is completed.

While the completion of this revitalization project is several years in the making, the effects of this renewal can already be seen. The removal of Interstate overpasses has brightened areas that were once dark. Academic institutions have expressed interest in owning various pieces of land which will create a new landscape as well as bring jobs to the Ocean State.

RIEDC will be taking the lead in the disposition of the land and the marketing of the parcels to local, national and international companies. The report will be used as an informational guide in the disposition process. While the report is not a new master plan for the area, it will focus activities that may affect implementation such as best use, zoning and land sale.

## **Small Business and Entrepreneurial Support**

### **Rhode Island Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Designed to help train and develop future entrepreneurs, the Rhode Island Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (RI-CIE) formally opened its doors on April 28. The RI-CIE was the result of strategic planning and collaboration among government, academic and business leaders, and was a top action item in RIEDC’s 2009 Economic Growth Plan. RIEDC and Brown worked with the state of Rhode Island, city of Providence, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, and other partners to develop RI-CIE.

RI-CIE is designed to be a center that supplies expertise to the state’s college and university faculties, as well as to researchers and entrepreneurs who want to launch new companies in Rhode Island, focused on high technology, life sciences, design or other knowledge economy businesses. The center has already become a hub for entrepreneurial activity in Rhode Island, hosting Betaspring in summer 2009. Betaspring, a micro-seed venture capital fund platform, guides young entrepreneurs through an intensive, 12-week mentoring program to help them get their new business off the ground.

Since the grand opening in April, the center has expanded its roster of partners including Johnson and Wales University, Roger Williams University, Lifespan, University of Rhode Island, the Slater Technology Fund and the Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council.

Creating a center that actively engages our entrepreneurs throughout our entire state while at the same time giving them the tools to succeed and grow their business here is an essential component in strengthening Rhode Island’s economy. RI-CIE, and the collaborative efforts



The RIEDC We Mean Business event helps businesses cut through the red-tape.

it will help generate and will spur economic growth throughout the state. The center is a cornerstone of the state's efforts to identify and nurture our future entrepreneurs, to accelerate new business growth and to bring new, high-wage jobs to Rhode Island.

### Small Business Capital

RIEDC was disappointed that Governor Carcieri's Small Business Stimulus Package, which included an infusion of capital into the state-backed Small Business Loan Fund and a Small Business Guaranty Program, was not included in the General Assembly's 2010 budget.

In an effort to further support small businesses, RIEDC has worked diligently to provide a full continuum of capital for Rhode Island's small businesses. Since January 2009, RIEDC's Small Business Loan Fund awarded seven loans for a total of more than \$1.6 million. These loans are expected to create 63 jobs and retain 396.

In addition, the eight banks that pledged to invest more than \$165 million into small- and mid-sized Rhode Island businesses as part of the governor's small business stimulus package, have gone ahead and issued loans without the 90 percent guaranty proposed by RIEDC and Governor Carcieri thanks to help from the federal government.

In February 2009, the Obama administration introduced its own stimulus package, which raised the Small Business Administration guarantee on most loans to 90 percent. As a result, the banks were able to loan out more than \$100 million of the original \$165 million in the form of SBA-backed or direct loans.

With the federal guaranty slated to expire in 2010, RIEDC plans to bolster its efforts to implement a state-backed loan guaranty into the General Assembly's



More than 400 people attending the annual RIEDC We Mean Business event on September 10, 2009.

2011 budget. A state-backed guaranty will allow Rhode Island's banks to be more flexible and available to support our economy's greatest asset: its small businesses.

### Every Company Counts

Entrepreneurs, innovators and small businesses are the heart of Rhode Island's economy. They create new jobs and bring dynamic ideas, innovative services and new products to the marketplace.

RIEDC's small business support program, Every Company Counts, continues to provide unmatched services to Rhode Island small businesses. Since January, ECC has garnered more than 380 new company contacts and held more than 100 small business workshops, attracting more than 2,000 small business owners.

### Conclusion

Under rapidly changing economic conditions, RIEDC has enacted its plan to strengthen the role of economic development in Rhode Island, leading to promising initiatives and programs that identify opportunities for job creation and growth at every turn.

Rhode Island is starting to work again. We must not lose ground on the progress we have made in 2009 and continue to identify new actions to further strengthen Rhode Island's economy.

## Rhode Island, Working Again

[www.riedc.com](http://www.riedc.com)

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