Overview
Leveraging decades long investments in industry sector partnerships across manufacturing, defense, information technology, and cybersecurity, the Regional Alliance for Pathways into Defense (RAPID) sought to train and place over 1000 unemployed and underemployed individuals from Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut into careers. Beginning with a leading-edge public-private recruitment partnership, RAPID identified candidates based on interests, aptitude and ability, and placed them in employer-designed occupational skills training, pre-apprenticeship, and work experiences designed to lead to full-time employment in defense-related industries. Participants could choose to enter employment immediately after training or continue in a career pathway towards apprenticeship and higher wages.

As memorialized in the state’s economic development plan; defense-related manufacturing, information technology, and cybersecurity, were high potential growth sectors for the state of Rhode Island, but lacked strong and adequate pipelines of skilled talent. The results of RAPID exceeded the already lofty grant goals: reaching or surpassing service and employment targets several quarters ahead of schedule. Partner employers in defense and supply-chain organizations report high satisfaction with candidates recruited and placed through the program and conversations quickly shifted to how the state and employer partners can sustain this momentum after the America’s Promise grant ends.

Program Highlight
The ‘demand-driven-ness’ of our America’s Promise-funded activities was its ‘secret sauce’. Placing employers in the driver’s seat of program design and delivery meant they were equally accountable for results and felt real ownership of the process. This demand-driven orientation met employer needs and opened pathways to opportunity for a socio-economically diverse cohort of job seekers. It also allowed employers to innovate beyond the recruitment and hiring practices they were accustomed to. Several partners adopted an informal and more intimate interview process for program completers. In one instance, hiring managers were provided a resume binder of program completers and were invited to a ‘speed dating’ event where job seekers and employers were able to connect and converse in a relaxed setting. This eased the burden for some talented individuals who find...
interviews challenging and helped employers develop a deeper understanding of the individuals and their background.

**Regional Workforce Partnerships and Sector Strategies**

The RAPID effort built upon investments that Rhode Island has made in building the capacity and knowledge based of our sector-based partnerships. These partnerships continue to grow and evolve taking on a greater and greater role in meeting the demands of their respective industries, while connecting more and more unemployed and/or underserved Rhode Islanders with economic opportunity. These additional activities, even if not directly funded by America’s Promise, are nonetheless aided by the strong performance of RAPID’s America’s Promise effort, which has helped build trust and recognition among a growing number of employers.

**Success Story and Impact**

Caleb C. was a former offender who was looking to get his career back on track. Previously an outdoor adventure guide, Caleb participated in an America’s Promise-funded, pre-apprenticeship training through Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA). After training, Caleb received a job with GEV Wind Power (GEV Wind), a leading global provider of blade-maintenance services in the wind industry that recently made Rhode Island home of its U.S. headquarters. Showing promise almost immediately, Caleb was selected by his employer to travel to the U.K. to complete a mandatory Global Wind Organization (GWO) training he needed to work in the emerging offshore wind industry. The US offshore wind industry is relatively young, with only a few skilled professionals trained to work in the sector. Caleb is now one of only a handful of domestic wind blade technicians.

**Regional Alliance for Pathways in Defense (RAPID)**

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