



Comments on Your Government

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Review of 2013 Economic Development Reforms

This report provides a status update of legislation included in the House and Senate economic development legislative packages. It also references other considered legislation that was not contained in either chamber's economic development packages, but may have a business climate impact. It concludes by outlining the short- and long-term impacts of these reforms, and provides suggestions for economic development policy moving forward.

Overview

Rhode Island is at a pivotal economic crossroad. While there are some signs that Rhode Island is emerging from the economic conditions of the *Great Recession*, the state's economy still faces challenges. Several of Rhode Island's industries remain generally anemic, and the state is experiencing high unemployment and a shrinking labor force. The shortage of economic vitality and negative business climate perception continues to require a long-term strategy to redesign Rhode Island's approach to economic development.

These factors, combined with recent shortcomings in the state's economic development incentive programs, resulted in critical momentum this legislative session to improve the state's approach to economic development. In particular, the House and Senate developed broad suggestions for economic development reform that addressed the need for both short- and long-term change. The initial reforms proposed, as well as those finally enacted, reflect that there will be no one single act that will fix Rhode Island's relative economic position. While state policymakers enacted several essential long-term reforms, the state must continue to focus on systemic, structural changes—as well as individual

programmatic improvements—to advance the overall economy.

This RIPEC Comments briefly summarizes the content and status of the main economic development reform initiatives, and discusses ways in which these reforms address the state's short- and long-term needs.

Senate and House Economic Development Packages

The Senate and House economic development packages are best categorized into four subject areas of reform: structural government; business climate and programmatic changes; workforce and education; and infrastructure improvements. In terms of the first category, as exhibited in Table 1, there are seven main proposals to change Rhode Island's structural approach to economic development. Two of these bills were signed by the Governor, while four became effective without the Governor's signature. The last was passed by the Senate, but not the House.

Structural Reform

The six enacted proposals have the potential to substantially alter the way Rhode Island state government approaches economic

**Table 1
Structural Government Economic Development Reforms**

Proposal	House	Senate	Status
Economic development planning council	6069 Sub A	712 Sub A	Signed by Governor
Executive office of commerce	6063 Sub B		Effective without Governor's signature
Council of economic advisors	6070 Sub B	730 Sub B	Effective without Governor's signature
EDC restructuring	6071 Sub A	718 Sub B	Effective without Governor's signature
Commerce and workforce coordinating cabinet		713	Incorporated into 6063 Sub B; Effective without Governor's signature
EDC website reform		714	Senate read and passed
Business Development Center	6067		Signed by Governor

development in the long-term. As RIPEC’s previous research [indicates](#), these changes have the opportunity to positively change:

- The level at which decisions affecting economic development policy are made;
- The level at which responsibility and authority for economic development decisions rest;
- The type of economic research conducted to plan and develop economic development policy;
- The coordination of diverse state economic development policies and goals; and
- The implementation of state or quasi-public economic development services.

Ultimately, the creation of a new state government presence for commerce (through the newly created Economic Development Planning Council; Executive Office of Commerce; Council of Economic

Advisors; and Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet), and a revised and rebranded quasi-public economic development agency contributes to a more data-driven, coordinated, and focused approach to economic development in Rhode Island.

Economic Development Planning Council

House bill 6069 Sub A and Senate bill 712 Sub A, which closely mirror Massachusetts’ economic development planning model, address Rhode Island’s lack of a comprehensive, strategic economic plan. The enacted proposal calls for the creation of a diverse economic planning council to develop a vision and policy, present it for public comment, and submit it to policymakers at the beginning of each gubernatorial administration (starting in January 2015). It also requires that the planning council develop a strategic plan for implementing the policy. The plan must consider the integration of business growth with land use and transportation choices; an analysis of how the state’s infrastructure

supports economic development strategy; a focus on equity; reliance on economic data and analysis relating to Rhode Island's competitiveness and business climate; and recommendations for improving and expanding skills and resources.

Executive Office of Commerce

Prior to this proposal, Rhode Island was the only New England state that did not have a state government agency leading its economic development activities. Furthermore, at least 38 states have some form of state government agency, secretariat, or the Governor's office running economic development. Only a few other states have just a quasi-public or public-private partnership as the lead economic development organization. House bill 6063 and Senate bill 1048 as enacted would create an Executive Office of Commerce as Rhode Island's lead agency for economic development. Effective February 1, 2015, it will incorporate functions from the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation, and effective April 1, 2015, it will incorporate functions from the Rhode Island Department of Administration. By September 1, 2015, it will provide the General Assembly with a study including recommendations for the integration of functions from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and the Rhode Island Department of Administration. This legislation also includes the Office of Regulatory Reform in the newly created Executive Office of Commerce.

Once appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, the Secretary of Commerce will be responsible for leading the Executive Office of Commerce and serving as Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (the newly branded Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation). He or she will also be

responsible for convening the newly created Economic Development Planning Council, chairing the Council of Economic Advisors, serving as vice-chair of the Human Resources Investment Council, and chairing the Governor's Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet. For a complete list of the Secretary's 16 authorized functions, see Appendix A.

Council of Economic Advisors

Prior to House bill 6070 Sub B and Senate bill 730 Sub B, Rhode Island did not have a central collection point of data and information on the state's economy. This proposal establishes a Council of Economic Advisors, consisting of 9 members appointed by the Governor, from inside and outside state government. The Council is to be chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, and staffed by the Executive Office of Commerce and the Division of Statewide Planning. The Council's functions are to:

- Serve as a collection point of data and information on the economy;
- Advise on economic policy for policymakers;
- Prepare economic policy analysis on specific issues;
- Publish reports and analysis as it sees fit;
- Establish a central repository of economic information;
- Prepare an annual economic report on the state's economy; and
- Review and advise on the state's strategic economic development plan.

While Rhode Island currently has some structures in place to collect data on economic performance, these metrics or targets are not considered as part of the state's economic development policies. For example, Rhode Island is missing an opportunity to conduct the type of industry-

specific economic analysis that its neighboring states conduct as part of its economic development policy formulation. The current EDC and other agencies within state government, such as the Department of Administration, have economic modeling computer software that would allow for this analysis; however, there is no one strategically pursuing and sharing this type of analysis in a broadly coordinated, planned method. The establishment of this council requires that economic analysis be conducted regularly, and be coordinated with other state economic development policies and implementation.

Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet

Another structural proposal enacted to enhance coordination amongst state economic development activities was the Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet (which was ultimately incorporated into House bill 6063 Sub B). The Cabinet shall “provide for the integration and coordination of the activities of the various agencies and departments that are involved in the development of the Rhode Island economy and its workforce, and ensure the consistent implementation of the economic development policy and strategic plan.”

Council members include, but are not limited to, the Secretary of Commerce, the Director of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (the previous Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation), the Director of the Department of Transportation, the Director of the Department of Administration, the Director of the Division of Revenue, the Director of the Department of Human Services, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Director of the Department of Business Regulation, the Director of the Department of Environmental Management,

the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, the Director of the Department of Corrections, the Chair of the Governor’s Workforce Board, and the Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing. Upon the appointment of a Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Commerce shall chair this Cabinet.

Economic Development Corporation Restructuring

Legislation transmitted to the Governor also proposed restructuring and renaming the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, effective January 1, 2014. The Economic Development Corporation will remain a quasi-public agency, but will be renamed the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (RICC). The Secretary of Commerce will be the Chief Executive Officer of the newly organized Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, which is authorized to be the operating agency of the policies and procedures established by the Secretary and the Executive Office of Commerce. There shall also be a Chief Operating Officer (COO) of RICC, who shall be the chief administrative officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the corporation.

This legislation re-emphasizes the requirement that RICC be structured to be customer-centric and responsive to the needs of businesses in Rhode Island, and includes a new requirement that RICC review the status of venture capital in Rhode Island annually. The Board of Directors is amended to include a representative from the Governor’s Workforce Board, and a representative of a minority business. The Board must also create a capital finance subcommittee, and develop a set of metrics and reporting requirements to disclose programs and services provided by the corporation, as well as the effectiveness of

each offering in an annual report. Lastly, the legislation enumerates clear roles and responsibilities and transparency requirements of RICC Board members.

Additionally, the Governor signed legislation to establish a Business Development Center within RICC that would support businesses and economic development projects through a customer-centric approach. This center will be RICC's concierge-type service center, which will provide services such as peer-to-peer assistance, mentoring, finance options, and other services.

Business Climate Reform

As listed in Table 2, the General Assembly also passed important components of the House and Senate economic development packages related to business climate reforms. For example, House bill 6065 Sub B, which was initially part of the House package, was merged with Senate bill 980 and signed by the Governor. This legislation allows employers to pay employees less frequently than weekly, which is a requirement more consistent with the national standard, and will reduce employer payroll costs.

**Table 2
Business Climate and Programmatic Economic Development Reforms**

Proposal	House	Senate	Status
Holiday flexibility	5698 Sub A	295	Held in committee
Bi-weekly pay	6065 Sub B	980	Signed by Governor
DEM expedited citations	5677 A	495 Sub A	Signed by Governor
DEM as central review agency	5425 Sub A	672 Sub A	Signed by Governor
Statewide permitting advisory council		757 Sub A	Signed by Governor
Code consistency council		761 as amended	Signed by Governor
Rapid Rhody	6068 Sub A		Referred to Senate Finance
Manufacturing industry revitalization act	6064/ Budget article 24		Withdrawn
Tax credit accountability act	6066 Sub B	734 Sub A	Signed by Governor
Statewide arts sales tax exemption	5844	743	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Tax expenditure statement of purpose		745	Referred to House Finance
Historic structures tax credit oversight		747	Referred to House Finance
Historic structures credit	6060/Budget article 22		Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Accelerated depreciation of assets	5478*	744	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Made in RI Manufacturing Collaborative	6030	809 Sub A	Signed by Governor

* Not formally in House package, but mentioned as a business climate priority during the House package press conference

Both packages also include a bill, already signed by the Governor, which requires local wetlands and septic ordinances to be consistent with state regulations (H5425 and S672 SUB A). Since many municipalities have implemented stricter setback and septic disposal standards than the state, this allows for a more predictable regulatory climate.

Another set of bills, which passed in concurrence and were signed by the Governor, promote regulatory reform by allowing the Director of Environmental Management to use an expedited citation process for alleged noncompliance (H5677 and S495 Sub A). The Senate's package also includes a proposal (757 SUB A), to establish a municipal advisory council on statewide permitting that would develop recommendations to establish a statewide process for electronic plan review, encourage full participation of each city and town in the state, and then review which cities and towns are participating (until a statewide process is established). Similarly, S761 as amended, which was signed by the Governor, aims to enhance regulatory predictability by creating a code consistency council to reconcile inconsistencies in the state's building, fire, elevator, and other related state codes.

Three tax changes were enacted as a result of both chambers' economic development packages. Among other oversight requirements, S734 Substitute B and H6066 SUB B, which was signed by the Governor, requires a cost-benefit analysis on economic development tax incentives that are incorporated into the annual unified economic development report. Tax expenditures included for cost-benefit review are: the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation's Project Status; Incentives for Innovation and Growth; the Jobs Development Act; the Distressed Areas

Economic Revitalization Act; and the Motion Picture Production Tax Credit.

An additional tax change, initially found in the House's economic development package (H6060), was ultimately incorporated into the FY 2014 signed budget as article 22. Article 22 reopens the state's historic tax credit program to encourage development of historic buildings. This article allows for a tax credit of up to 20.0-25.0 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures, with a maximum project credit of \$5.0 million. These credits are applicable to the state's business corporation tax, franchise tax, public service corporation tax, tax on banks, tax on insurance companies, and personal income tax.

Similarly, the budget included a statewide arts district sales tax exemption. This exemption applies to the sale of original and creative works of art created by and sold by writers, composers, and artists residing in and conducting business in Rhode Island. The exemption applies to Rhode Island's 7.0 percent sales and use tax.

Workforce and Education Reform

As indicated in Table 3, workforce or education reform proposals from the House and Senate economic development packages were incorporated into the adopted FY 2014 budget in articles 15, 18, and 23. For example, H5979 (article 23) promotes opportunities in the biosciences industry by providing state money for paid internships. House bill 6062 SUB A and Senate bill 809 Sub A, which were agreed to in concurrence, were signed by the Governor, revise labor laws to allow students to train during school hours in approved apprenticeship programs in trade and industry.

A proposal to expand the provision of child care to participants in state-approved

training, apprenticeship, internship, or other job readiness programs (S250), was incorporated into budget article 15, as was a program to establish a web-based system to link employers with prospective employees, and identify skill gaps (S403 and H5939). The Back-to-Work RI program (H5033 and S402 SUB A), which allows a person collecting unemployment benefits to be paired with a business for training at no expense to the business, was also adopted in this article.

Two education/workforce proposals were held in their respective committees. First, the Senate’s reverse transfer legislation, which would require the Board of Education to establish a policy for RI’s public higher education institutions to enable credits earned toward a 4-year degree to be transferred and counted toward the awarding of a 2-year Associates degree (S511) was held. Second, S600, which would allow a dual enrollment policy in which high school seniors could take some of their senior year classes at the community college, allowing them to simultaneously complete high school requirements while earning college credits was also held.

Infrastructure Reform

Table 4 lists the two main infrastructure reforms that were enacted this session. The Municipal Road and Bridge Revolving Fund, which was ultimately incorporated into the FY 2014 and signed by the Governor, creates a revolving fund to be

**Table 3
Workforce and Education Economic Development Reforms**

Proposal	House	Senate	Status
RI works		250/ Budget article 15	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Back to work RI	5033/Budget article 15	402 Sub A/Budget article 15	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
RI jobs match	5939/Budget article 15	403/Budget article 15	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Reverse transfer	5536	511 Sub A	Senate resolution read and passed
Help former students finish degree		512	Senate read and passed
Dual enrollment	6290	639 Sub B	Signed by Governor
Childcare/benefits cliff	5132	736/Budget article 18	Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Innovate RI small business	5979/Budget article 23		Incorporated into budget (signed by Governor)
Manufacturing apprenticeships	6062 Sub A		Signed by Governor

administered by the Rhode Island Clean Water Finance Agency (CWFA). CWFA now has the authority to receive and disburse funds from the state for the revolving fund; make and enter into binding commitments to provide financial assistance to local cities and towns; and levy administrative fees on cities and towns as necessary (only if the fees have been previously authorized).

Funding for this revolving fund may come from the CWFA budget appropriation, as well as other CWFA revenue sources. These include, but are not limited to, loan repayments, investment earnings, bond proceeds, and administrative fees. Money from the fund would be spent for the purposes of providing assistance to cities and towns for financing costs of approved projects; to refinance the costs of the projects; to fund reserves for bonds of the CWFA; as well as administrative fees such

Table 4
Infrastructure Economic Development Reforms

Proposal	House	Senate	Status
Municipal road and bridge revolving fund	6059/Budget article 20		Incorporated into budget
Distributed generation	5803	641	Signed by Governor

as insurance, insurance premiums, and fees on lines of credit. Funding will also provide subsidy assistance, or credit enhancements for cities or towns.

To receive project approval, cities and towns must submit infrastructure plans to the Department of Transportation, which will then evaluate submitted plans, and in accordance with established project evaluation criteria, identify projects eligible for funding. Once CWFA calculates the financial assistance that is available for the forthcoming calendar year (not to exceed \$20.0 million), CWFA shall award assistance to cities and towns for approved projects. The goal of this fund is to lower the cost of borrowing for road and bridge projects of cities and towns.

The second bill, which was signed by the Governor, amends the definition of a small distributed general project to include renewables, and amends the definition of larger projects to include those greater than three (rather than five) megawatts nameplate capacity, and allowing renewable energy projects. It also allows hydroelectric projects to participate in the standard contract enforcement program.

Additional Business Climate Legislation

In addition to the House and Senate economic development packages, other proposals were enacted that will likely impact the cost of doing business in Rhode

Island. For example, one component of article 9 removes the \$25,000 cap on direct expensing of fixed asset acquisition under the federal Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 179, ultimately conforming Rhode Island with federal law. It is

anticipated that this provision will assist small businesses matching cash flow with tax deductions.

Alternatively, article 9 also states that starting in January 2014, corporations will no longer be able to obtain a Rhode Island tax benefit for the federal domestic production activities deduction (known as the “production deduction” in IRC Section 199). In addition to raising costs for businesses that relied on this deduction, this provision changes the level of predictability or certainty regarding tax expenditures available to businesses operating in Rhode Island.

One piece of legislation that was ultimately signed by the Governor, addressed Enterprise Zone tax expenditures. Initially, the FY 2014 budget as proposed suggested the phase-out of the Enterprise Zone credit program, which allows qualifying companies to reduce their corporate income tax burden. Instead of phasing this credit out over time as was initially proposed, H5034 and S77 Sub A expanded the Enterprise Zone program to include the city of Pawtucket to the enterprise zone designation under the Distressed Areas Economic Revitalization Act.

The FY 2014 budget also includes a temporary sales tax exemption for wine and spirits sold at package stores and liquor stores. Also, during this period, no alcoholic beverages sold at retail stores will be subject

to Rhode Island's state minimum markup. Alternatively, the budget also temporarily increased excise taxes on various categories of alcoholic beverages including still wines, spirits such as whiskey, and malt beverages (including beer).

Another tax change relates to the estate tax on farmland. Farmland will now be appraised at its use value—not at its fair market value. Other than these tax changes and the tax changes previously outlined in the House and Senate economic development packages, there were no broad tax changes this session.

There were two bills enacted that have the potential to undo some of the positive business climate reforms that were enacted. First, S794 and H5946, signed by the Governor in concurrence, creates a bargaining representative for individual child care providers to negotiate conditions of employment, benefits, grievance procedures, and other matters. This requires the Governor negotiate, subject to the same procedures as if child care providers were state employees. This extension of bargaining rights includes a fee to be charged to all child care individual providers, establishing a precedent in which the state collectively bargains with private sector employees.

Another bill signed by the Governor expands the state's temporary disability insurance program (TDI) to individuals out of work caring for newborns, newly adopted children, or sick relatives. Currently, TDI covers individuals who suffer a non-work-related illness or injury. Since TDI is a factor considered in business climate rankings by organizations such as the Tax Foundation, this expansion has the potential to negatively impact Rhode Island's relative economic ranking.

Fit with RIPEC's Findings

In the wake of the 38 Studios bankruptcy filing, Governor Lincoln D. Chafee called upon RIPEC in May 2012 to examine the structure and operations of the state's EDC. The Governor asked RIPEC to identify Rhode Island's critical economic problems, and to provide a roadmap for how the EDC and the state could approach economic development going forward.

As RIPEC undertook this analysis, a consistent theme developed—the EDC was established as an entity separate and distinct from government, despite its charge to be the state's lead organization on economic development. For this reason, RIPEC's analysis was not solely confined to the internal structure of the EDC. Rather, RIPEC examined the state's existing structure of economic development. After surveying industry best practices, comparative structures in other states, stakeholder input, internal data analysis, and organizational management theory, RIPEC concluded that economic development reform was needed at quasi-public and state government levels.

In particular, RIPEC's recommendations centered on reorganizing the state's economic development structures and processes; modifying the EDC's current structure and focus; and additional activities to enhance the focus and direction of economic development policies. In terms of reorganizing the state's economic development structures, RIPEC recommended the creation of an Executive Office of Commerce under the Office of the Governor, which would: oversee various state government commerce-related agencies; be led by a newly appointed Secretary of Commerce; and coordinate policy and implementation with the newly created Council of Economic Advisors and

Commerce Coordinating Council. This recommendation aimed to concentrate authority and responsibility for commerce at the highest level of state government. It also aimed to create a more cohesive, data-driven system of economic development policy formulation and implementation.

The core of RIPEC's state government related reform recommendations emphasize the need to regenerate, or reboot the underlying state government approach to economic development. The status quo government structure results in an economic development state approach that lacks fundamental economic development functions such as:

- Decisions affecting economic development policy were often made at the EDC, and were often not coordinated with the economic development policies of other state agencies, including those of the Governor's Office;
- Decisions affecting economic development policy were often not driven by robust data or economic analysis;
- There was no consensus-based, coordinated economic development plan for the state; and
- The EDC faced difficult, negative public perception, and resources were not aligned according to the agency's core functional priorities.

Changes to programs or economic development offerings would not compensate for these fundamental shortcomings in Rhode Island's state government economic development organization. For these reasons, RIPEC advocated for the creation of a more efficient, effective governmental role in economic development.

Comments

Broadly, the results of the 2013 legislative session's economic development were successful, in that legislative leaders focused on needed short- and long-term economic development reforms. The resulting enacted legislation acknowledges the need for a fundamental shift in the way Rhode Island state government approaches commerce.

As indicated by Figure 1, the reforms enacted this session put in place a new system to address the shortcomings of Rhode Island's current economic development structure. Most prominently, the creation of the Executive Office of Commerce, and the Secretary of Commerce position will elevate the importance of commerce in state policy deliberations. The Executive Office of Commerce will rely on the data analysis and suggestions of the Council of Economic Advisors, and the economic plan of the Economic Planning Council, to develop commerce-related policy, which it will then coordinate with the state agencies in the Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet. The agencies in the cabinet, as well as the newly branded Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (RICC) will implement and execute the policies developed by the Executive Office of Commerce. Moreover, the data collected through the use of RICC's customer relationship management system will be provided to the Council of Economic Advisors and the Executive Office of Commerce so that a full feedback-loop of data is shared and acted upon in policymaking.

Once this foundational system is in place the state will be better positioned to comprehensively address other business climate and cost of doing business issues. For instance, in February 2013, the Fourth Economy, a consulting firm hired by the

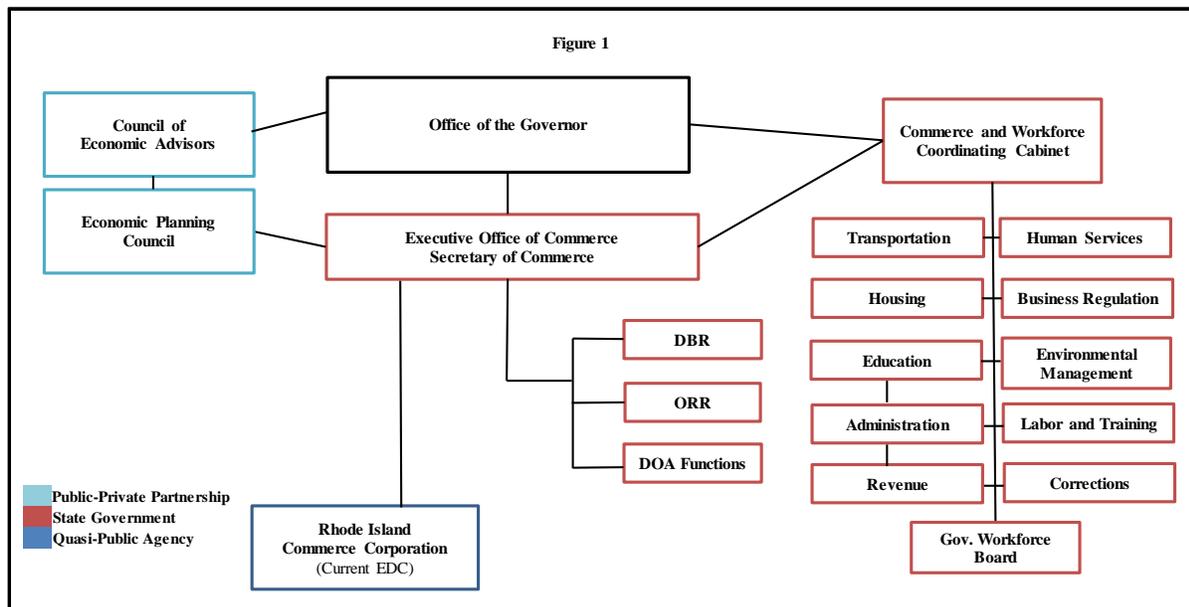
state, issued an economic development data analysis and assessment, including an analysis of Rhode Island’s business climate. While the Fourth Economy’s report began to break down factors impacting the cost of doing business in Rhode Island, a comprehensive, coordinated, consensus-based, and actionable approach is needed to identify specific areas for change, and to develop even more specific policy responses for improvement. The new state government structure created this legislative session will be able to provide the cycle of analysis, development, and implementation needed to address fundamental components of the cost of doing business in Rhode Island.

Furthermore, elevation of the Office of Regulatory Reform as a function of the Secretariat, provides it better access to the regulatory input of the Economic Development Planning Council, Council of Economic Advisors, and Commerce and Workforce Coordinating Cabinet. Since regulatory streamlining is an essential economic development function, the work of this office will have the opportunity to increase coordination and bolster its

presence and visibility as a tool to make it easier to do business in Rhode Island.

Additionally, the public-private participation necessary for the Economic Development Planning Council, and the Council of Economic Advisors will help diversify and strengthen community input in economic development decision-making. Ensuring community input will be critical in setting the agenda for reforming Rhode Island’s business climate going forward. The Economic Development Planning Council in particular will provide the opportunity for organizations affected by economic development policy to address its policy priorities in a formalized, coordinated process.

In addition to addressing important business climate reforms, the General Assembly made progress this session by fundamentally altering the government structures that will affect economic development decision-making. While the majority of these structural changes will not go into effect until the next gubernatorial term, private and public sector stakeholders should remain



focused on improving the state's cost of doing business and overall business climate. This legislative session has proven that with enough research, focus, and dedication, Rhode Island can begin to make progress on improving the fundamental weaknesses that continue to hold its economy back.

Though many of the changes put into place in the 2013 legislative session resulted in long-term positive changes, additional efforts will be needed over the next year to

continue this momentum of reform and improvement. Rhode Island's consistently weak standing in national business climate rankings is further evidence that the state needs to continue raising the bar for improvements. Consideration of systematic and programmatic changes should continue with the goal of making Rhode Island's economy increasingly conducive to doing business.

Appendix A

Effective in 2015, and subject to the direction and supervision of the Governor, the Secretary of Commerce shall be authorized to:

1. Coordinate the administration and financing of various departments or divisions within the office and to supervise the work of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.
2. Serve as the Governor's Chief Advisor and Liaison to federal policymakers on economic development as well as be the principal point of contact in the state on any such related matters.
3. Review and ensure the coordination of the development of an overarching economic development plan as produced by the office.
4. Receive from department directors, within the timelines specified, any information and resources the secretary deems necessary in order to perform the reviews authorized in this section.
5. Engage in regulatory reform across all state agencies to protect the health and wellbeing of Rhode Islanders while meeting business needs for a clear, predictable, and reliable regulatory structure in the state; including the implementation of systems to enhance customer service by simplifying and expediting state permitting processes.
6. Prepare and submit to the governor, chairpersons of the House and Senate Finance Committees, and the Caseload Estimating Conferences, no later than April 15 of each year, a comprehensive overview of the Rhode Island economy. The secretary shall determine the contents of the overview and shall determine the important economic data and information that will inform the governor, and the revenue estimating committee on the economic conditions of the state and future issues and forward looking projects on the Rhode Island economy.
7. The directors of the departments, as well as local governments and school departments, shall assist and cooperate with the secretary in fulfilling this responsibility by providing whatever information and support shall be necessary.
8. Resolve administrative, jurisdictional, operational, program, or policy conflicts among departments and their executive staffs and make necessary recommendations to the Governor.
9. Assure continued progress toward improving the quality, accountability, and efficiency of state-administered programs to support the Rhode Island economy.
10. Prepare and integrate comprehensive budgets for commerce services departments and functions and duties assigned to the office. The budget shall be submitted to the state budget office by the secretary, for consideration by the governor, on behalf of the state's commerce agencies (in accordance with provisions set forth in section 35-3-4 of RI General laws).
11. Utilize objective data to evaluate economic development policy goals, resource use and outcome evaluation to perform short and long-term policy planning and development.
12. Establish an integrated approach to interdepartmental information and data management that complements and furthers the goals of the Council of Economic Advisors and facilitates the transition to a consumer-centered system of state administered economic development programs and services.
13. At the direction of the Governor and the General Assembly, conduct independent reviews of state-administered economic development programs, policies and related agency

actions and activities and assist the department directors in identifying strategies to address any issues or areas of concern that may emerge thereof. The department directors shall provide any information and assistance deemed necessary by the secretary when undertaking such independent reviews.

14. Provide regular and timely reports to the governor and make recommendations with respect to the state's economic development agenda.
15. Employ such personnel and contract for such consulting services as may be required to perform the powers and duties lawfully conferred upon the secretary.
16. Implement the provisions of any general or public law or regulation related to the disclosure, confidentiality, and privacy of any information or records, in the possession or under the control of the executive office or the departments assigned to the executive office, that may be developed or acquired for purposes directly connected with the secretary's duties.