(1) Executive Summary of Component Project

The **Maritime Readiness Workforce Project** (MRWP), led by the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC), serves Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts through the Ocean Tech Hub (OTH). As OTH accelerates the commercialization of autonomous marine systems (AMS), sustained success depends on addressing two interconnected workforce challenges: limited capacity for defense-required cybersecurity certification and the absence of a coordinated, employer-led system to align workforce supply with evolving industry demand.

Focus Area 1: CMMC Certification Readiness and Compliance Capacity

Access to Department of War (DoW) markets requires firms to meet Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) standards, a prerequisite for participation in defense contracts and a key element of Executive Order 14269 to restore America's maritime strength. Certification capacity remains constrained due to a limited supply of qualified assessors nationally and regionally. MRWP addresses this bottleneck by expanding regional CMMC capacity through training 15 new CMMC Level 2 assessors and 250 internal CMMC Champions across OTH companies.

By the end of year 3, the project will enable CMMC certification readiness and assessment access for approximately 25-30% of AMS firms, reducing assessment delays and lowering barriers to compliance, particularly for small and mid-sized suppliers. This will happen over a two-phased approach with years 1 and 2 focused on training Certified Practitioners (CCPs) in IT departments across Ocean Tech employers and years 2 and 3 focused on training and certifying accredited DoW CMMC accessors. Over time, this expanded capacity supports CMMC compliance reaching 50% or more within five years and 80% over the long term, enabling broader participation in defense markets critical to maritime and national security priorities. This work will be led by Polaris MEP and Mass Tech.

Focus Area 2: Employer-Led Talent Alignment and Data Infrastructure

While the OTH region benefits from strong education, training, and workforce programs, these assets are not currently coordinated through a system that anticipates employer demand. MRWP establishes an employer-led, data-informed workforce system, building on the Real Jobs RI model and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's TPM framework, to align employers, educators, and workforce partners around verified demand signals.

Through shared data infrastructure, employer convening, and demand forecasting, the system aligns training capacity with AMS job requirements and directs workforce funding toward high-demand credentials. By end of year 2, the project will engage 30+ regional employers and training partners and support at least 200 new hires, scaling to 400 new hires across the OTH region as commercialization accelerates. Activities are led by OPC with supporting partners across industry and education to focus on employer-led workforce alignment, data infrastructure, and aligning talent supply chains. After year 2, this workforce engine continues and will increasingly rely on non-federal funds.

Together, these components establish durable workforce infrastructure that reduces AMS vacancy rates, narrows technical skill gaps, and strengthens the defense supply chain. Over time, MRWP contributes to lowering AMS workforce vacancy rates below 10% and maintaining adaptive training aligned with evolving technologies. By pairing CMMC certification readiness with employer-driven workforce alignment, MRWP accelerates technology commercialization

and positions the OTH to strengthen U.S. defense competitiveness, generating broad economic benefits for the region while supporting America's maritime leadership and global standing.

MRWP also establishes a centralized monitoring and evaluation infrastructure serving all OTH component projects. This system organizes performance reporting, integrates workforce data, and ensures alignment across OTH performance metrics. By enabling real-time tracking and cross-component coordination, the project strengthens accountability and accelerates measurable progress toward commercialization and defense readiness goals.

(2) Project Specific Challenge

2.1 The ocean is emerging as the next frontier for American military and economic leadership. Yet many OTH companies cannot access key defense markets or support national security objectives without CMMC, a prerequisite for participation in DoW contracts. As CyberSheath's CEO commented in their September 2025 Study, "Eighty thousand defense contractors need Level 2 certification, yet only 270 currently hold final CMMC certificates… **Contractors that aren't prepared will be locked out of billions in DoD contracts** while competitors who invested in real compliance and cybersecurity capture the business." This gap between market opportunity and certification readiness represents a material technology commercialization barrier for ocean technology firms.

This barrier is driven by a national shortage of accredited certification capacity and specialized talent. As of late 2025 approximately 1% or less of the U.S. Defense Industrial Base (DIB) is certified, which is insufficient to certify the defense industrial base at scale. Limited assessor availability increases certification timelines and costs, particularly for small and mid-sized suppliers that play critical roles in the AMS supply chain. Firms that fail or delay certification face stalled commercialization, lost contracts, and exclusion from defense markets, even when their technologies are otherwise market ready.

To remain commercially viable and eligible to support U.S. maritime operations, OTH must expand regional CMMC capacity by increasing the pool of assessors and developing internal company talent to lead readiness efforts. This component project addresses that constraint by training 15 new CMMC Level 2 assessors and 250 internal CMMC Champions across Rhode Island and Massachusetts. These investments reduce certification bottlenecks and enable more firms to progress from development to deployment within defense supply chains.

Beyond certification capacity, OTH faces a related scaling challenge: the absence of a coordinated, employer-validated workforce data infrastructure to align talent supply with rapidly evolving AMS demand. While training funds, certification pathways, and workforce programs exist, they operate largely in silos without shared demand signaling. As a result, training supply, certification preparation, and hiring timelines are frequently misaligned with firms' commercialization needs, delaying scale even when technologies and contracts are ready.

This component project addresses both challenges by pairing expanded CMMC certification capacity with an employer-led TPM approach supported by shared data infrastructure. TPM provides the coordination model, while the data infrastructure enables forecasting, alignment, and continuous adjustment as technologies, standards, and defense requirements evolve.

This approach builds on proven precedent in maritime industries. In Hampton Roads, Virginia, the Hampton Roads Workforce Council used an employer-led TPM framework to align workforce pipelines with the U.S. Navy's submarine industrial base, engaging defense employers directly and coordinating training partners around Navy requirements. Applying this model to

ocean technology positions OTH to reduce certification bottlenecks, accelerate AMS commercialization, and strengthen the domestic defense supply chain.

2.2 Private industry is already investing heavily in ocean technologies, but the scale, coordination, and speed required to secure U.S. maritime leadership necessitate a federal role. Between 2020 and 2022, approximately 1,161 private companies in Rhode Island received prime DoD or Department of Homeland Security contracts, with the sector receiving more than $2.7 billion in funding in 2022. These companies have 9949 employees and an additional 9086 indirect jobs. Because CMMC compliance is mandatory but non-revenue generating, individual firms, particularly small and mid-sized suppliers, cannot efficiently solve certification and workforce alignment challenges independently. Fragmented state or private efforts cannot overcome national assessor shortages, cross-state labor market dynamics, or the absence of shared workforce data infrastructure.

Strategic federal investment provides the connective tissue needed to align employers, training providers, workforce systems, and data assets across the OTH region. By expanding CMMC certification capacity and establishing employer-led workforce coordination supported by shared data infrastructure, federal support ensures private innovation aligns with DoW priorities, accelerates commercialization timelines, and strengthens the domestic maritime and defense industrial base.

(3) Project Specific Solution

3.1 This workforce component project is designed to address both certification constraints and workforce alignment needs across the OTH. In the near term, OTH will expand regional CMMC certification capacity by increasing the number of qualified assessors and internal company leads, removing a critical bottleneck preventing firms from accessing DoW contracts. In parallel, the project establishes a coordinated, employer-led talent system supported by shared data infrastructure to ensure workforce supply, training programs, and hiring timelines remain aligned as AMS technologies scale.

Together, these activities complement and enable all other OTH component projects by increasing required certification capacity and embedding an employer-driven framework to anticipate demand, adapt training programs, and coordinate workforce investments across OTH.

Key Activities for Expanding CMMC Compliance: address a certification bottleneck that constrains companies' ability to commercialize and scale technologies into defense markets.

- Fund training and certification for CMMC Certified Professionals (CCPs) and CMMC Certified Assessors (CCAs) accredited by The Cyber AB
- Support connections between CCPs and Approved Training Providers to complete the CCA certification pathway
- Train 250 internal CMMC Champions across AMS firms to lead organizational readiness and compliance efforts prior to Level 2 assessment

Key Activities for Developing Training Pipeline Management System: build a scalable, sustainable workforce coordination solution that supports both national defense and regional economic growth through employer leadership and shared data.

- Convene employers and training partners to identify critical AMS workforce needs
- Integrate employer-validated demand data to forecast hiring trends and skill requirements

- Align training programs, credentials, and enrollment targets with AMS job demand
- Map and strengthen talent pathways that connect learners to employment and advancement opportunities

Technical Assistance, Project Management, and Evaluation: time-limited technical assistance and evaluation necessary to implement TPM and support all OTH component projects:

- TPM system design and implementation, including employer engagement processes, demand-forecasting protocols, data workflows, and governance structures
- Shared workforce data infrastructure, enabling alignment of training, certification, and hiring with employer-validated demand
- Data collection and third-party evaluation, ensuring consistent measurement and reducing duplication across OTH component projects

While this project will directly train 15 CMMC assessors and 250 CMMC Champions, the federal investment also establishes durable workforce infrastructure, including employer coordination mechanisms, shared data systems, and workforce platforms, that will serve the OTH region well beyond the period of performance. This one-time investment creates sustained capacity for workforce alignment and certification readiness at minimal ongoing cost, making MRWP a cost-efficient, systems-level intervention rather than a stand-alone training program.

3.2 Recent workforce investments including EDA Good Jobs FY24, OLDCC awards, SENEDIA (Southeastern New England Defense Industry Alliance) initiatives, and other public and private efforts have laid a strong foundation for talent development in the OTH region. Notably, the FY24 EDA Good Jobs investment of $3.9 million focused on expanding near-term training capacity for advanced manufacturing roles, establishing sector partnerships, and launching initial outreach to underserved populations. These efforts successfully addressed urgent skill gaps by increasing training availability and enrollment.

Where earlier investments increased capacity, this project ensures that capacity is continuously aligned with AMS demand as technologies, standards, and defense requirements evolve. By integrating TPM and shared data systems, MRWP transforms prior investments from reactive training efforts into a proactive, demand-driven workforce system.

At the same time, investment in CMMC readiness addresses a critical commercialization and scaling barrier by enabling OTH companies to meet compliance requirements necessary to secure defense contracts. Expanding certification capacity protects vital national security technologies, unlocks new revenue opportunities for regional firms, and supports the broader effort to restore and sustain U.S. maritime leadership.

3.3 MRWP is implemented by specialized partners whose roles and capabilities are essential to removing certification and workforce scaling barriers across Rhode Island (RI) and Massachusetts (MA). Each partner performs a distinct function required for effective execution.

Partner	Role & Deliverables	Critical Function
Polaris MEP	Lead RI CMMC readiness and training activities; train 10 CMMC Level 2 assessors and 125 internal CMMC Champions using Polaris's established CMMC "Kickstarter" program;	Coordinate internal staff with partners to ensure available and affordable certified CCP/CCA training, further establish relationships with RI defense contractors, and active connections to Approved Training Providers (ATPs) required for

	coordinate with MassTech to ensure cross-state consistency and alignment.	the CCA certification pathway. This specialized CMMC capacity cannot be replicated by general workforce or training providers.
Mass Tech	Lead MA CMMC training; train 5 assessors and 125 Champions; coordinate with Polaris for cross-state alignment	Serves as MA's statewide technology intermediary with existing infrastructure to administer employer-facing grant programs and coordinate CMMC readiness efforts. MassTech provides the legal, administrative, and programmatic capacity required to deploy CMMC training at scale in MA and integrate results into a regional, cross-state certification pipeline.
RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC)	Overall project lead; TPM architect; convene employer groups; coordinate data infrastructure; manage technical assistance contract/s; oversee reporting for all OTH project components	Lead for component project to oversee sector ecosystem collaboration, defining workforce demands, skill requirements, and talent supply chain design. Collaborating with RI's public and private institutions of higher education.
TPM Capacity Building Grants	Provide targeted, project-based support to partners for employer engagement, data contribution, and integration of TPM demand forecasts into existing workforce and education systems.	TPM implementation requires coordinated participation across state labor agencies (e.g., RIDLT wage and hiring data), employer-facing economic development organizations, and training providers with enrollment and completion data. No single entity holds all required datasets; these grants support initial system design and integration, enabling long-term sustainability after build-out.
Technical and Data Infrastructure Assistance Consultant/s	Design shared data pipelines, forecasting tools, dashboards, and analytics that operationalize the TPM system; establish monitoring and evaluation infrastructure serving all OTH component projects.	Provides specialized technical expertise to integrate real-time employer demand data with training supply and outcome data across institutions. This role enables TPM functionality at scale and creates a shared evaluation backbone for the entire OTH, not solely MRWP.

3.4 MRWP leverages existing assets within the OTH, including established certification pathways, workforce partnerships, and data systems, to implement the proposed activities efficiently and at scale.

For expanding CMMC readiness and certification capacity, OTH will leverage:

- **Certified CMMC Professional (CCP) and CMMC Certified Assessor (CCA) training courses and examinations**: accredited by The Cyber AB, to ensure consistency with DoW requirements.
- **Polaris MEP's CMMC Level 2 "Kickstarter" program**: provides Rhode Island defense firms with 60–80 percent of required CMMC controls, a Plan of Action & Milestones (POA&M), and a structured roadmap to achieve full Level 2 compliance.
- **Rhode Island College's Institute for Cybersecurity & Emerging Technologies**: offers ongoing cybersecurity training that CMMC Champions can access through the Tech Hub to maintain and advance skills following initial certification.

For implementing the employer-led TPM system, OTH will leverage:

- **The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's TPM methodology**: a proven framework for building employer-driven talent supply chains aligned to industry demand.
- **The Rhode Island Longitudinal Data System (RILDS):** links education and workforce data to track outcomes, analyze priority sectors, and support labor market analysis.

- **Polaris MEP's Good Jobs Advanced Manufacturing Sector Partnership**: network of ocean technology employers and training providers that will supply employer demand inputs and continuous feedback.
- **Holistic workforce coordination platform**: will support data integration, credential tracking, job placement monitoring, and longitudinal outcome analysis.
- **Strong regional base of higher education institutions, training providers, state agencies, and intermediaries**: supported through TPM capacity-building grants to enhance coordination, data contribution, and cross-institutional effectiveness.

3.5 This workforce component integrates directly with other OTH initiatives to create a unified strategy for AMS commercialization across the region. Through OTH investments in the American Marine Test Ranges Network (AMTRN), Test Access Network (TAN), and Autonomous Marine Systems Rapid Prototyping Centers (AMS-RPC), companies gain access to real-world testing, validation, and prototyping environments that reduce technical risk and shorten time to market. As firms progress from testing to production, the workforce component ensures that talent supply and certification readiness keep pace with deployment timelines.

The TPM framework serves as the connective tissue between OTH's commercialization assets and the regional workforce system. Employer demand signals generated through participation in AMTRN, TAN, and AMS-RPC are translated into workforce requirements that inform training design, credential alignment, and hiring timelines. This ensures that workforce programs respond to verified commercialization needs rather than lagging after scale-up occurs, reducing duplicative training and improving placement outcomes.

Investment in a holistic workforce platform further strengthens this integration by connecting individuals to high-value upskilling opportunities aligned with OTH demand, tracking credentials and job placements, and supporting wraparound services that expand participation. In parallel, expanded CMMC certification capacity ensures firms advancing through OTH commercialization pathways can meet DoW requirements and compete for defense contracts without delay.

Together, these integrated investments align workforce readiness with technology development, certification, and deployment, enabling OTH companies to scale and deliver advanced maritime technologies in support of U.S. defense and economic priorities.

(4) Project Specific Outputs and Outcomes

The outputs and outcomes below reflect early, measurable milestones within a systems-level investment designed to establish durable workforce infrastructure across the OTH region. Near-term outputs focus on building certification capacity, employer coordination, and data infrastructure within the period of performance. Intermediate and long-term outcomes reflect how these investments reduce workforce bottlenecks, accelerate technology commercialization, and strengthen defense supply chain readiness as firms adopt and scale over time.

Baseline	Component Project Outputs (End of the PoP)	Intermediate Outcomes (5 years)	Long-term Outcomes (10 years)	Component Goal(s)	Contribution to Tech Hub Outcomes
Only 1 identified CMMC assessor in	Certify at least 15 DoW CMMC Level 2 assessors and train 250	Deploy 10+ newly certified Level 2 assessors into	Expand certifications to 15+ Level 2	**Reduce bottlenecks for CMMC Level 2 assessments**	**Build regional cybersecurity compliance and defense**

region and less than 200 in the U.S.	CMMC Champions across OTH companies	regional assessment capacity	CMMC assessors	**leading to faster DoW contract readiness**	**contracting readiness**
Less than 10% of AMS Cyber firms are Level 2 CMMC Compliant	Enable CMMC certification readiness and assessment access for 25–30% of AMS firms through expanded assessor capacity and trained internal Champions	Achieve 50%+ AMS firms that are Level 2 CMMC compliant	Expand to 80%+ AMS firms that are Level 2 CMMC Compliant	**Increase share of AMS firms meeting cybersecurity maturity thresholds (CMMC Level 2+)**	**Unlock DoW contract eligibility, strengthens national security**
AMS workforce vacancies exceed 17% (~700 unfilled technical positions in AMS, robotics)	Engage 30+ regional employers and training partners in TPM demand forecasting and alignment	Reduce AMS vacancy rates to less than 15%	Support sustained reductions in AMS vacancy rates, reaching below 10% over time	**Create employer-led talent pipeline that keeps pace with technological advancement**	**Protect economic interests, and maintain U.S. global economic competitiveness**
New hires needed for growth in industry	Establish data-enabled hiring pipelines supporting at least 200 hires	Achieve 400 new hires across the OTH region	Expand hiring capacity as AMS commercialization scales	**Improve talent pipeline through data infrastructure**	**Real-time demand signaling to strengthen defense pipelines**

(5) Project Specific Long-Term Viability of Sunsetting Plan

5.1 MRWP is structured as a one-time federal investment in shared data and coordination infrastructure that enables durable, employer-driven talent pipelines across the OTH. By establishing employer-led demand signaling and integrated workforce data systems, employers gain a sustained ability to connect with qualified talent, while education and training partners continuously adjust enrollment targets and curricula to reflect real-time market needs.

Building on prior investments such as EDA Good Jobs, this approach reduces waste by avoiding misaligned credentials and ensures workforce investments remain responsive as AMS technologies and defense requirements evolve.

5.2 The ocean technology has already attracted strong public and private investment, signaling long-term growth. A one-time investment in technology and infrastructure for the TPM system will establish a lasting foundation for workforce development. After federal funds are spent, the system will continue to operate and evolve through updated data and employer input. Challenges such as shifting labor demands and rapid technological change will be addressed through ongoing feedback and adaptive program design. By keeping employers engaged and using real-time workforce data, OTH is designed to remain competitive and responsive through this component project.

Additionally, the CMMC certification strategy is self-sustaining. Once a cohort of regional assessors is trained and certified, they will be able to earn salaries supported by the high national demand for assessments. CMMC Champions will have the foundational skills to keep AMS firms secure once training and certification is complete and can access ongoing

cybersecurity training through courses available at low cost through tech hub partners.

5.3 After the federal investment, technical assistance activities sunset as planned, while employer coordination, data use, and workforce alignment functions continue through routine workforce system operations. This transition ensures MRWP delivers lasting value through institutionalized processes and systems rather than time-limited programming.

(6) Taxpayer Bargain

6.1 MRWP boosts economic prosperity across the OTH region by aligning talent pipelines with verified employer demand. Through employer engagement, targeted training, and shared data systems, the project reduces skill mismatches, lowers vacancy rates, improves job placement, and expands access to higher-wage employment opportunities. A holistic workforce coordination platform further broadens participation by connecting individuals to training, jobs, and existing wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation, and digital access.

By expanding CMMC Level 2 certification readiness and assessment capacity, the project enables more AMS firms to compete for DoW contracts, unlocking new revenue opportunities and supporting firm growth. As companies scale operations, the region benefits from increased household income, business activity, and long-term economic resilience.

6.2 MRWP strengthens America's position in the global economy by reinforcing leadership in maritime innovation and advanced manufacturing. Maritime transport underpins global trade, and dominance in ocean technology is essential to securing supply chains and maintaining economic competitiveness. Recent federal directives highlight the erosion of the U.S. maritime workforce due to prolonged underinvestment in this strategically vital sector.

By establishing an employer-led, data-informed workforce system, MRWP responds directly to this challenge. The TPM framework ensures training capacity keeps pace with technological advancement and evolving defense requirements, while shared data infrastructure enables continuous alignment across employers, educators, and workforce partners.

6.3 MRWP advances national security priorities by strengthening the workforce required to support U.S. leadership in AMS and defense manufacturing. As global competition intensifies, particularly in naval and unmanned maritime technologies, the U.S. must maintain a secure, capable, and adaptable domestic talent base.

By expanding the pipeline of CMMC Level 2 certified assessors and internal CMMC Champions, the project strengthens cybersecurity compliance across the defense supply chain and enables more firms, especially small and mid-sized suppliers, to participate in defense markets. A broader, compliant supplier base enhances competition, accelerates innovation, and improves the resilience of DoW contractors.

6.4 Federal investment in MRWP amplifies prior state and private investments by aligning training, certification, and workforce resources with verified employer demand. Rather than funding isolated programs, the project establishes shared infrastructure that improves coordination, reduces duplication, and ensures workforce investments directly support technology commercialization and defense readiness.

These outcomes—expanded market participation, accelerated commercialization timelines, and strengthened defense supply chain resilience—would not occur at the same scale or pace without targeted federal investment. As a result, MRWP delivers a durable return for taxpayers by strengthening U.S. economic competitiveness and national security through workforce infrastructure that endures beyond the period of performance.