



Building a Culture of Growth: RIHousing's Scalable Approach to Professional Development and Succession

In a competitive workforce environment, RIHousing identified a critical need and challenge: how to retain talent, build institutional knowledge, and prepare the next generation of leaders, all without significantly increasing agency costs. Great people work for RIHousing—but what were we doing to encourage their personal and professional advancement? How could we intentionally drive long-term employee retention and promote from within?

What began as important questions turned into a strategic priority in 2020 and has since evolved into an employee-driven professional development culture and environment—one that's measurable, scalable, and most importantly, aligned with our agency's goals.

Professional Development Driven by Employees

In 2023, RIHousing transformed its approach to training by launching a new Training Needs Survey, placing employees at the center of program design. Our agency staff now identifies the skills, topics, and tools they want to strengthen. This data-driven model ensures that professional development offerings directly reflect staff needs, skill gaps, interests, and career aspirations.

The result is a high-impact and responsive training strategy that evolves annually and maximizes relevance across our many departments, from Finance to Legal to Homeownership.

EvolveU: Growing Skills, Knowledge, and Success from Within

To expand access to our trainings while controlling costs, RIHousing launched EvolveU, a primarily in-house training program that leverages internal, and occasionally external, expertise to deliver high-quality learning opportunities, from leadership and management, to communication and collaboration, to technical IT systems and tools, to career development and planning.

In 2024 alone:

- 13 focused training programs were delivered—each with multiple session offerings to maximize engagement and attendance opportunities.
- 730+ employees registered to attend these trainings, demonstrating strong interest in our offerings and openness to professional development.

This internal model allows RIHousing to scale learning efficiently while strengthening knowledge sharing and collaboration across departments. With most trainings held in-person in our downtown Providence office, we aim to cap workshops to 50 participants, allowing for a more intimate and hands-on experience. Many times, employees are interacting and learning together with team members from different departments—sometimes for the first time. This simultaneously promotes new networking and collaboration within our agency.

In 2024, recognizing the strong demand for IT trainings, our IT department began leading trainings and workshops on specific tools like Smartsheet and DocuSign, launching the IT Showcase. This



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shift to a larger-scale, in-house IT training model enabled our HR team to further expand professional development offerings in other areas of interest.

In 2025, our HR team further expanded our robust and thoughtfully curated professional development sessions, offering 12 high-quality learning opportunities in partnership with three trusted external training providers. Collectively, these trainings generated strong engagement, with 212 total employee registrations, a clear indicator of the value and relevance of the offerings.

Designed for Deeper Impact

RIHousing's professional development approach goes beyond volume and diversity of training offerings, it prioritizes effectiveness.

Woven throughout our robust professional development programming, we also offer separate sessions for managers and individual contributors for conflict resolution. This structure creates a more comfortable, candid learning environment where participants can openly share experiences and perspectives without hierarchical pressure. The result is deeper engagement and more meaningful skill development.

Through strategic scheduling, we align sessions with operational workflows within our agency to maximize participation without compromising critical business operations. Spring and summer are prioritized due to higher availability and fewer competing holidays. Fall is avoided for large-scale trainings due to holiday congestion. Winter is a peak operational period for many departments due to federal and state program updates.

Aside from these professional development trainings, RIHousing also hosts Lunch & Learns throughout the year—trainings designed to spotlight each department and showcase current and new programs, leading to stronger organizational awareness and collaboration. Attendance is stellar, with nearly half of the agency joining to listen to and interact with their colleagues.

Mentor Connect: Building the Next Generation

Launched in 2025, the Mentor Connect Program pairs employees for structured guidance, knowledge sharing, and skill development. Through consistent support, active listening, and personalized coaching, participants build confidence, expand their capabilities, and achieve meaningful growth. The program creates a safe, supportive space for employees to explore goals, receive feedback, and advance their careers. When our employees thrive, our entire organization thrives—and Mentor Connect helps make that possible.

Early results demonstrate exceptional success:

- Since September 2025, 10 pairs of mentor/mentees have been connected and are actively collaborating
- According to February 2026 survey responses, each individual reported that the program is meeting or exceeding expectations and that they are well-matched with their partner.

This program not only supports individual growth but strengthens succession pipelines by intentionally supporting and developing our future leaders.



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Measurable Impact

RIHousing’s investment in professional development is delivering clear and measurable results:

- 37 internal promotions (2023–2025), representing about 14% of our agency.
- Consistently high employee engagement in the well-renowned *Providence Business News*’ “Best Places to Work” survey—averaging over 90% employee engagement with the survey.
- Data from 2024 and 2025 employee feedback show strong employee satisfaction with training opportunities, and an agency culture that promotes and encourages participation in professional development opportunities.

This impact reflects a connection between training investments and our overall employee experience at RIHousing.

High Impact, Low Costs: Effective Use of Resources

The greatest cost of these efforts for RIHousing has been the time of our staff, as this is a cross-departmental effort spearheaded by our four team members in HR. This investment—and our new professional development model—prioritizes efficient use of resources. The model offers multi-faceted trainings year-round to address all sides of employee growth—technical and soft skills, professional advancement, and institutional know-how that is critical to pass on to the next generation of employees. With most trainings led by in-house experts, external consultants are used selectively and strategically. Our approach delivers significant benefits while keeping costs low and sustainable.

What’s Next: Succession Planning Program

Building on this foundation, RIHousing is launching a formal Succession Planning Program, offering Director-level training in collaboration with an external partner to encourage promotion from within. This is an ongoing effort that builds on our staff-level trainings aimed at career advancement within RIHousing. The roll out of our Succession Planning Program will begin in summer 2026, kicking off with managerial positions and then spreading to the rest of the organization.

A Replicable Model for Other HFAs

RIHousing’s professional development approach offers a blueprint for other housing finance agencies:

- Employee-informed program design
- Scalable in-house training delivery that’s impactful and cost-effective
- Strong alignment between development, engagement, and retention

By leveraging existing staff expertise and prioritizing measurable outcomes, this model delivers high impact without requiring significant new resources.

Conclusion

RIHousing has moved beyond traditional training programs to build a culture of continuous growth. By investing in its people—through targeted development, growth, engagement, mentorship, and succession planning—the agency is strengthening its workforce and actively shaping its future.



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VISUAL AIDS

Smartsheet Overview for Beginners
April 25, 2023
12:00 - 1:00 pm

THIS VIRTUAL WORKSHOP COVERS

- The fundamentals of Smartsheet
- How to Collaborate with multiple users
- Systems Navigation

Facilitated by
Lenore Coughlin
Multi Family Housing
Compliance Manager

REGISTER HERE

CROSS-GENERATIONAL COLLABORATION WORKSHOP
How We Thrive Together

SEPTEMBER 25TH | 12 - 1:30PM

Our workplace includes Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and a growing Gen Z— each with unique strengths and expectations. This **virtual** workshop helps you move beyond assumptions and build stronger, more respectful cross-generational relationships.

Register Here!

Sabine Smith
CEO of Wordsmith Coaching LLC

9 Traits of Highly Successful Teams

July 21st (Choose one session)
Morning Session: 9:00 - 12:00
Afternoon Session: 1:00 - 4:00

THIS SEMINAR COVERS

- What a "true" team looks like
- How to take a team inventory
- Innovative approaches to conflict resolution
- Innovative ways to get things done as a team
- Teamwork towards solutions for tough issues

A Successful Team...

- IS SURE OF ITSELF
- IS OPEN AND HONEST
- KNOWS THEIR ROLES
- IS SKILLED AT RESOLVING CONFLICT
- KNOWS IT ISN'T AN ISLAND
- KNOWS HOW TO CELEBRATE!

LUNCH & LEARN
RIHousing
"We Make Dreams Come True"

Virtual Series on How Interest Rates are Determined
November 15th, 12:00

LEARN ABOUT INTEREST RATES, HOW THESE PRICE LEVELS ARE DERIVED, AND HOW THEY CAN SHIFT, OFTEN DAILY. FOR RIHOUSING, INTEREST RATES ARE THE EXTERNAL PRICE OF OUR MONEY AND REFLECT OUR FUNDING OR BORROWING COSTS.

LUNCH & LEARN



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EVOLVEU: CULTIVATING GROWTH THROUGH LEARNING

PERFORMANCE PULSE TRAINING

This training session empowers attendees with the knowledge and tools to effectively set expectations, provide feedback, conduct performance reviews, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. By mastering these skills, participants contribute to increased employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall team productivity.

Open to all - Managers are required to attend. Space is limited, so secure your spot today! Contact Isa Santamaria for additional questions: isantamaria@rihousing.com



EvolveU

Cultivating Growth through Learning

Cultivating Growth through Learning is a comprehensive training program designed to empower individuals at all career levels to excel in their roles. The program offers a diverse and inclusive range of trainings covering leadership, technical skills, communication, and personal development, fostering a holistic growth experience.

Participants will engage in interactive workshops, and skill-specific trainings tailored to their needs. The trainings focus on enhancing leadership capabilities, fostering effective communication and honing personal development skills crucial for professional success.

This program is open to all employees, from entry-level to senior management, seeking to expand their skill sets, advance their careers, and contribute more effectively to the organization.

Individuals can foster their growth, enhance their contributions to their teams, and position themselves for advancement within the organization.



LUNCH & LEARN

VIRTUAL MEETING

RIHousing

"We Make Dreams Come True " Virtual Series

Access Independence & Community Septic System Loan Programs

Presented by:
Ruth Anglon
Community Lending Processor,
Homeownership Division

December 16th, 12:00

Learn about two RIHousing programs targeted to help homeowners and public health.

The Access Independence II program helps aging and special needs populations have a safe and healthy place to call home.

The Community Septic System Loan program aims to safeguard public health, protect and improve ground and surface water, and assist homeowners in upgrading their septic systems.

