

## American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendation Cover Sheet

Please submit this document with any recommendations for funding from Rhode Island's allocation of federal fiscal recovery funds available through the American Rescue Plan Act. This information will be made available to the public along with any detailed documents submitted that describe the proposal. It is encouraged that such documents identify clear goals and objectives and quantifiable metrics.

**This is not a formal request for funds, and submission of recommendations does not guarantee a response, public hearing, or appropriation from the General Assembly.**

Name of Lead Agency: Museum of Freedom and Slavery

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person / Title: Kamaria Hayden Phone: (401) 563-8890

Address: 225 Dyer Street, PVD RI 02903

Email Address (if available) \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

Tourism and Economic Redevelopment

Total request: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

One-time or Recurring Expense? Recurring

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) – See link for further information

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/arpa/commdocs/Treasury%20-%20Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

- Respond to the public health emergency and its economic impacts X
- Premium pay to eligible workers \_\_\_\_\_
- Government services/state revenue replacement \_\_\_\_\_
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_

# **Proposal for National Museum of Freedom & Slavery**

## **Executive Summary**

The National Museum of Freedom & Slavery in Providence, RI will explore the struggle between America's ideals of liberty and its realities of oppression. This institution will show how the country strives, and sometimes fails, to uphold its values since our founding. The museum will be a flagship destination for the city, illuminating a concept central to our democracy, creating a pipeline for future historians, and providing much-needed tourism dollars for the area.

## **Background**

The South and Midwest have created several notable museums showcasing aspects of the Black experience in America since the advent of slavery. In recent years, these museums experienced record numbers of visitors seeking to learn more about oft-concealed truths. Notably absent from these conversations is a major cultural space in the Northeast that examines the role of New England states in the perpetuation of slavery (and oppression more broadly), while also being a global leader in developing models of tolerance and democracy.

## **Vision**

The City of Providence has been a pivotal location in US history – from its inception as a haven of tolerance to the fight for independence from England to its complicity in the international slave trade throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, neither the interplay of these countervailing ideas nor the essential role of Rhode Island have been explored in a public way beyond the state's borders, and yet they are both fundamental to the formation of the nation and our national identity. To rectify this gap in the national story, the museum will focus on the perennial struggle between America's ideals of freedom and the reality of slavery and oppression.

Local Projects, the country's leading museum design firm, will develop the museum concept. The firm designed the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, dozens of other major museums, and most relevantly the newly-opened Greenwood Rising Black Wall Street History center in Tulsa, OK, which tells the story of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the vibrant and resilient community that withstood the attack and rose from the ashes. Local Projects also contributed to the design of the Legacy Museum, created by the Equal Justice Initiative, in Montgomery, AL, which attracted 600,000 visitors in its first year.

The proposed location and scope will be approximately 40-60,000 square feet in downtown Providence, encompassing 30,000 square feet for exhibitions as well as event space, cafe, gift store, auditorium, meeting rooms, and administrative offices. Importantly, this will not be a collection or research institution; the space will be an educational and exhibition institution and will include:

- Permanent multimedia exhibits,
- Traveling exhibitions that align with the theme of the museum,
- Objects on loan from local, national, and international archives, and
- Interpretations of the museum's theme by contemporary artists.

# Proposal for National Museum of Freedom & Slavery

## Impact

This project will enable the city and state to advance equity among those who have been historically excluded from the narrative of American History – Black, Indigenous, People of Color. With a metropolitan statistical area of 1.6 million people and proximity to the Boston metro area, the museum will draw roughly 300,000 museum attendees per year, generating revenues of \$1.2 million or more from admissions, gift shop and café sales. The 1,000 additional pedestrians daily will revitalize Kennedy Plaza and ultimately produce a “museum cluster effect” promoting economic diversification-focused resilience through increased tourism, educational initiatives, workforce development, and a vibrant arts and culture scene throughout the area.

## Comparables

Museums with similar square footage addressing freedom and civil rights in similarly-sized MSAs attract an average of about 300,000 visitors per year, as shown in Table 1. Note that the RISD Museum in Providence attracts [100,000 visitors](#) in a typical year.

**Table 1**

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>MSA Population</u>	<u>Size (SF)</u>	<u>Annual Visitors</u>	<u>Gross Receipts</u>	<u>Cost (\$mm)</u>
National Underground Railroad Freedom Center	Cincinnati	301,000	2,137,000	<a href="#">158,000</a>	<a href="#">180,000</a>	3,012,607	<a href="#">110.0</a>
National Civil Rights Museum	Memphis	652,000	1,300,000	<a href="#">52,000</a>	<a href="#">339,288</a>	19,737,857	<a href="#">28.0</a>
EJI Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace	Montgomery	212,000	1,140,000	<a href="#">11,000</a>	<a href="#">600,000</a>	38,007,175	<a href="#">20.0</a>
International Civil Rights Center and Museum	Greensboro	291,000	772,000	<a href="#">30,000</a>	<a href="#">70,000</a>	336,199	<a href="#">32.1</a>
<b>Average</b>		<b>364,000</b>	<b>1,337,250</b>	<b>62,750</b>	<b>297,322</b>	<b>15,273,460</b>	<b>47.5</b>

Notes: EJI SF excludes outdoor Memorial for Peace and includes receipts for broader work of the institute; International Civil Rights Center SF is for exhibition space only.

## Funding, Status and Timing

The organizers are in the process of forming a 501(c)3 and an advisory board for the museum. The next steps in developing the museum will be to secure a space and to retain Local Projects to do initial conceptual work, which can be used to raise funds to build out the museum. Potential sites are under consideration with a primary criterion that they be historically significant. Of note, the developer of the Industrial Trust “Superman” Building has proposed to deliver a vanilla shell with a 25-year lease at \$18 per square foot. They would invest \$7-8 million in the grand banking hall and first subfloor to restore the shell and have asked for a letter of intent backed by a guarantor with adequate means. The space would be available for build out in late 2024, assuming the developer is able to acquire funding and legislative approval for the total restoration of the building.

The preliminary estimated total cost of space development is \$20 million, which will be funded through a combination of federal grants, private grants and individual donations. The estimated cost of sustaining operations of the museum once launched is \$2.5 million – through admissions and museum sales, private rental, and annual fundraising.