

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: The Rhode Island Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): The Boys & Girls Club of East Providence; The Boys & Girls Clubs of Newport County; The Boys & Girls Clubs of Northern Rhode Island; The Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence; The Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket; The Boys & Girls Club of Warwick

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Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details) Provide programs to support academic needs, mental health needs, and workforce readiness needs of more than 1,000 Rhode Island children daily.

Total request: \$ 750,000

One-time or Recurring Expense? We anticipate investment may be needed over 2 - 3 years to help youth get back on track for successful and on-time high school graduation.

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) –

- 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 _____



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
RHODE ISLAND ALLIANCE

October 30, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to present the following plan which addresses the needs of youth as they recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the RICAS scores showed only last week, we are at a critical point in this crisis for our school-aged children, and the Boys & Girls Clubs stand ready to partner with the state to ensure that youth across Rhode Island are on track to graduate on time and with a plan for their future.

Throughout the pandemic we have surveyed youth and families, and we have used this data to develop a comprehensive plan that meets children where they are today. With structured programs focusing on academics, mental health and wellness, and on teen workforce development, the Clubs can provide the type of wrap-around support children need to get caught back up. At the same time, our sites across the state are open to ensure that parents can go back to work to provide for their families.

As the State evaluates how best to allocate our relief funding, we urge you to invest in the true future of Rhode Island: it's children.

Sincerely,

Erin Gilliatt
Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of East Providence
Manager, Rhode Island Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs



The Expanded Importance of Out of School Time - School Year 2022 and Beyond

As we move through the third school year of the Covid-19 pandemic, we hope that this year will bring an increased return to “normal” for school children in Rhode Island, and yet we know that the crisis is far from over and there is a need for expanded out of school time support **now more than ever**.

In order to provide the support our children need in post-pandemic Rhode Island, we respectfully ask for an additional \$750,000 in supplementary funding for FY 2022. This investment would help the Clubs across the state expand our programs to meet critical needs of our families – and of our state.

For Rhode Island to truly recover, we need to get people back to work – and for that **families need access to high-quality childcare**. And as certain industries – like service and hospitality – face ongoing labor shortages, they need trained workers. The Clubs are prepared to help **train our teen** members to take on these jobs and ease the staffing burdens on RI small businesses. Finally, for Rhode Island children to stay on track to have great futures, they need to heal from the trauma of the pandemic. The Clubs offer comprehensive after school programs that address both their **academic and social and emotional wellness** needs, and take a trauma-informed approach to our work to ensure we are meeting children exactly where they are in these difficult times.

A History of Service

Since 1858, the Boys & Girls Clubs in Rhode Island have been a critical pillar of family support in our state, and never is our work more apparent than during times of crisis. We are there for our families during the state’s darkest hours – and the Covid-19 pandemic proved no exception. Almost eighteen months into this unprecedented crisis, the Clubs continue to provide our members – and their families – with whatever support they needed. In the early days, this included meals, hygiene products, and the tools to allow their children to learn from home. As the months continued and the pandemic evolved, we, too, pivoted, reopening for before and after school childcare along with distance learning all day from our buildings.

With the last school year often interrupted, the Clubs have become the most constant outside element in our members' lives.

Although the structure of our programs has shifted, our mission remains unchanged: to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. And we are prepared to do **whatever it takes to make the 2022 school year the best one ever for students throughout Rhode Island.**

We know that our work to support families in need is far from over. The long-term ramifications from the pandemic remain to be seen, but we know that there will be significant economic impacts for our families, as well as mental health and academic impacts for the children we serve. **The youth of Rhode Island need the Clubs now more than ever to help stay on track for great futures for them – and for our state.**

The Right Solutions for our Families – A Data-Driven Pandemic Response Plan

Since the Covid19 pandemic began, the Boys & Girls Clubs in Rhode Island have taken a collective and data-driven approach to determine our scope of services. With limited resources, we knew we needed to work to provide the right services to meet Rhode Island families' needs, and gathered data to chart our course of work.

The Clubs' 2020 Impact – Caretaker for our families:

In the early days of the crisis, family surveys painted a bleak picture from our families:

- 62% of our families had their income impacted by the crisis;
- 71% reported at least a moderate level of stress in their family as a result of the crisis; 29% reported to be “very” or “extremely” stressed;
- 20% reported needing additional food support;
- 58% reported at least some struggles with distance learning;
- 34% reported their children needed tutoring support;
- 47% reported their children were not getting daily exercise;

Our responses in 2020 were tailored to meet these needs: we expanded dinner programs, including dinner delivery services in some communities; we enhanced our learning support; we provided support to students who were distance learning – including opening our Clubhouses for students so they could learn remotely while their parents returned to work.

During these early days, our impact was significant:

- We provided more than 1,000 students with learning support, including both tutoring and hundreds of sessions of high yield learning activities that put fun in learning outside of the classroom.

- We provided more than 250,000 meals for families struggling to provide food for their children.
- **We made sure that Clubs were open even when schools were closed.**

The State of Rhode Island Children in 2021

As we entered the second year of the crisis, we were increasingly concerned about the mental health implications of the ongoing stress on our members. With reports of a looming mental health crisis nationwide, we again turned to our members to find out how they were feeling and use that information to plan, again, for how we could support them. Guided by a third-party evaluator, we fielded a survey to Club kids statewide to ask about their mental health, and we learned where our focus should be next:

- **Our kids are stressed:** 54% of members surveyed, most of whom were in elementary school, reported being stressed about school.
- **Our kids are sad:** 65% of members surveyed reported being sad at least “sometimes” in the previous week; 10% reported being sad “a lot.”
- **Our kids are bored:** 85% of members surveyed reported being bored at least “sometimes” in the previous week.

The Clubs are using this information to guide our work going forward into the 2022 school year and beyond. **Based on this data, we know that children will need increased services in the near-term to address these deficits,** specifically:

- **Increased access to quality before and after school childcare.** In order for families to get back to work, they need reliable high-quality childcare, and the childcare industry has been hard-hit by Covid. The Clubs offer such programs at all of our locations, and are facing some of the longest waiting lists in our histories. Additional funding will help to open new slots by enabling us to hire additional staff, and in some cases open new locations, to make sure more families in our communities have access to care.
- **Increased programs for teens.** In some respects, teens have been the forgotten youth of the pandemic. More self-sufficient than their elementary peers, they had fewer options for out of school time programs as organizations like the Clubs were forced to use space once reserved for teens for younger children. This reality is reflected in our survey takers, who were largely elementary aged.

While teens were more capable than younger students of navigating the world of distance learning, they missed significant developmental milestones during the pandemic, and as youth development professionals, we know that we don’t have much time left to **help teens get back on track to graduate on time and with a plan for their future.**

Additional funding earmarked for teen services will allow Clubs statewide to focus on this population to provide significant additional programming to help close these developmental gaps, particularly in **workforce readiness training**. Our nationally-designed programs equip teens with the skills that they need to enter the workforce, and will position them to fill the staffing gaps facing Rhode Island businesses, particularly small businesses and the service and hospitality industries.

- **District-Aligned Academic Support Programs.** The Clubs have decades of experience providing academic support for our members, and this need has only grown during the pandemic. **Increased funding will allow us to offer more academic help, meeting members where they are and helping them overcome the “Covid Slide.”** Working hand-in-hand with our local schools, we are prepared to offer our daily homework help program, *Power Hour*, along with tutoring when needed to directly support school work. Additionally, we incorporate academics throughout our programs to provide fun hands on learning opportunities each day, including STEM programs, chess clubs, book Clubs and more.
- **Increased support for youth mental health.** School stress and sadness are not what we want to be hearing from our younger club members, but unfortunately this local data validates the national trends that have been reported since the Covid-19 crisis began. The Center for American Progress found that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing needs for mental health services for students, due to the isolation created by social distancing and remote learning. **The ongoing ripple effects of COVID-19 make it more crucial than ever that youth of all ages, including those leading into the teen years, have robust social-emotional and academic supports** to combat continuing isolation, amplified mental health distress, increased substance abuse, greater vulnerability to abusive home situations, and other adverse factors.

We are prepared to lead recovery and stand ready to address these long-term impacts on our children, youth, and teens. Clubs across the state are now partnering with or have mental health professionals directly on staff available to provide mental and emotional health support for youth. Staff have also been trained in Mental Health First Aid, so they can spot the warning signs for mental health crises and how to address and refer individuals for proper treatment.

These resources mean that Clubs are ready to identify and provide support to those Club members who are feeling sad “a lot,” but for the other members, who are just feeling sad “sometimes,” we know that the programs that Clubs offer everyday will have positive effects on their outlook. In our most recent survey, we saw that children who reported getting more exercise also reported more positive social-emotional wellness responses, and every Club gives their members a chance to get moving through our

athletic programs which offer choices from instructional or casual fitness opportunities to competitive sports teams. Additionally, we offer mindfulness programs to help members manage their stress, and small group social-emotional wellness programs which give members a safe place to share their feelings.

A Proven Partner with Proven Results

The Boys & Girls Clubs in Rhode Island have been a trusted pillar of support in our state since the Boys Club of Providence was founded in 1858. The Covid-19 pandemic was unfortunately not the first time we have had to stand hand-in-hand with the State of Rhode Island to provide a safety net for those children who need us the most and our rich history in our communities gives us a road map forward as we conclude this rough chapter in our state's history.

More recently, the Clubs have been a proven partner for the State through the work that we have done with the Department of Human Services. Under contract since 2007, we have exceeded our deliverables by more than 15% each year. **Through this work, the Clubs were providing educational support to more than 1,000 children each day prior to the pandemic.** Moreover, these children were more likely than their peers to have post-secondary plans for college as well as to avoid high-risk activities. **We have proven year after year that Club programs work – and deliver a large return on investment for the state.** In fact, an independent study from the University of Michigan showed that for every \$1 of state investment, the Clubs returned \$9.60 in long-term impact.

From the after math of the civil war, to the Spanish flu pandemic, to the Great Depression and Great Recession, the Boys & Girls Clubs in Rhode Island have proven that we will do whatever it takes to make sure youth succeed even in the most trying times. We are proud to continue this work today and look forward to partnering with the state to shepherd another generation of youth through crisis and on towards their great futures.