

**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: RHODE ISLAND FREE CLINIC

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

Contact Person / Title: DR. MARIE GHAZAL, CEO Phone: 401-464-1014

Address: 655 BROAD STREET, PROVIDENCE 02907

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Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RI'S HEALTHCARE SAFETY NET: ADDRESSING COVID & HEALTH DISPARITIES

Total request: \$ 4,000,000

One-time or Recurring Expense? ONE-TIME

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 \_\_\_\_\_



**Rhode Island Free Clinic:  
Infrastructure for RI's Health Care Safety-Net  
\$4 Million Request for ARPA Funds**

*October 14, 2021*

*Marie Ghazal, DNP, MSN, RN  
Chief Executive Officer*

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*Marina Rodriguez, MD*

*Caroline Troise, MD*

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the tremendous work of the Rhode Island Free Clinic (Clinic). Often referred to as “the safety-net for Rhode Island’s safety net,” the Clinic provides critical health care services to Rhode Island’s most vulnerable adults. Without the medical, dental, behavioral health, and other services provided by the Clinic, thousands of Rhode Islanders would simply not receive *any* coordinated or preventive care, resulting in significantly higher costs to Rhode Island through unnecessary burdens on emergency rooms and hospitalizations, and tremendous negative impacts to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Built on the solid foundation of nearly 25 years of service to at-risk Rhode Islanders, including a 218% increase in adults seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Clinic is uniquely positioned in the state to improve health care access and quality, address social determinants of health, and reduce state health care costs for our underinsured.

**We request \$4,000,000 for Infrastructure for Rhode Island’s Health Care Safety-Net, our 4-year Plan to build Clinic services and sustainability to ensure vital care for vulnerable Rhode Islanders.**

Investment will provide quality health care to low-income adults throughout our state. We seek to increase access to services for Clinic patients statewide by mobilizing hundreds of volunteer providers in our acclaimed and cost-efficient volunteer model. ARPA funding is requested as a solid investment that will provide lasting impact to the longstanding need for health care access for uninsured adults in our state.

Over 50,000 working poor and low-income Rhode Islanders remain uninsured and without affordable medical care. Due to the pandemic, there is a greater demand for our services. These are our working poor and underemployed friends and neighbors – those who earn too much for Medicaid, yet too little to afford health coverage through HealthSource RI, or who simply do not qualify for care. They suffer from treatable illnesses and debilitating chronic conditions, but lack the care, information and resources necessary to stabilize and improve their health. The uninsured are not able to pay for their care, medications, tests and referral services necessary for their health – the Clinic uniquely provides all of these to patients.

**MISSION & OPPORTUNITY**

Founded in 1999 and serving the entire state of RI, the Clinic’s *mission* is to provide healthcare to uninsured low-income adults, and serve as a training site for aspiring healthcare professionals. Unlike walk-in clinics or urgent care settings, the Clinic provides a broad range of coordinated health services. Clinic patients have a Patient-Centered Medical Home at the Clinic, and receive Primary Care, Specialty Care, Dental Care, Behavioral Health Care, Labs & Diagnostic Tests, Medicine, Wellness Programs, and Health Education, all free of charge to patients.

The Clinic is a strong non-profit with a demonstrated history of proven success. It has grown from its grassroots, storefront origins to the award-winning statewide network of safety-net medical care that it is today. The Clinic annually mobilizes over 700 Volunteer Medical Providers and Community Health Partners to provide nearly 13,000 visits to uninsured low-income adults. Since inception, we have served over 25,000 uninsured adults and provided more than 100,000 medical and dental visits, including 26 specialties.

In 2020, we opened a statewide COVID-19 Response Site for uninsured adults most at-risk and hardest hit by the pandemic, the majority of whom are urban minorities who also suffer disproportionately from social determinants of health. We currently operate active Testing and Vaccinations, providing over 11,000 to date. At the same time, we experienced a 200+% increase in Clinic visits. We are the only Medical Home in Rhode Island that provides, entirely free of charge: Primary Care, Dental, Behavioral Health, Specialty Care, Labs & Diagnostic Tests, Medicine, and Wellness & Prevention Education. Our intervention is simple: low-income, uninsured RI adults enroll as patients, see a doctor, and are referred to whatever care, medicine, and support services they need to get and stay healthy – for free.

All Clinic patients are uninsured, low-income adults (18 and over) who earn below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$25,760 for an individual, \$53,000 for a family of four). Forty-four percent are male, 55% are female; 67% are Hispanic, 11% are white, 13% are African American, 4% are Asian, and 5% are Other/Unreported. Volunteerism and collaboration power our services.

We are nationally recognized and locally honored for our cost-effective, statewide Volunteer/Community Partner model. We raise 100% of our \$1.4 million annual budget, and leverage an additional \$6.8 million in In-kind health resources. **Lifespan Hospital Network** provides free laboratory, diagnostic, and specialty services for our patients at over 40 clinics. **CVS Health** provides free medication at designated CVS pharmacies and after-hours care at **8 MinuteClinics** throughout RI. **Delta Dental RI** supports dental operations. **Anchor Medical Associates, Bayside Endoscopy, Care New England, Coastal Medical** and scores of others provide free medical services coordinated by the Clinic as part of patients' free comprehensive care. Our **AmeriCorps VISTA Team** is one of the largest in RI, with Corps Members dedicating a year of public service to help build the Clinic's capacity.

The breadth, depth, longevity, and integrity of our Volunteer Network and Community Partners demonstrate that **we are effective in galvanizing and leveraging community support** across the state to provide RI's most underserved residents with coordinated, comprehensive health care. The Clinic mobilizes and coordinates a level and quality of care that is unlike any other nonprofit in our State supporting health care.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION – 4-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

Our Clinic has tremendous potential to increase statewide access to care for low-income, uninsured RI adults and reduce our state's rising cost of health care. ARPA investment will enable the Clinic to improve the health of Rhode Island's low-income, uninsured adults by expanding access throughout our state.

- GOAL 1: Improve statewide access and quality of **Primary Care** for uninsured adults;
- GOAL 2: Increase access to **Dental Care** for uninsured adults integrated into medical care at the Clinic;
- GOAL 3: Build infrastructure for **Telehealth & Electronic Medical Records**;
- GOAL 4: Build infrastructure for **Healthcare Trainee Workforce Development**; and,
- GOAL 5: Increase **Sustainability** by garnering additional donated support and enhancing our strong Volunteer/Community Partnership model

#### BUDGET

GOAL 1:	\$1,500,000 = 4 years x \$375,000
GOAL 2:	\$1,000,000 = 4 years x \$250,000
GOAL 3:	\$ 500,000 = 4 years x \$125,000
GOAL 4:	\$ 400,000 = 4 years x \$100,000
<u>GOAL 5:</u>	<u>\$ 600,000 = 4 years x \$150,000</u>
TOTAL	\$4,000,000

## **CLINIC RESULTS**

*The Clinic provides excellent value.* Our effective and efficient volunteer model allows the Clinic to provide a year of comprehensive, coordinated medical home care for just \$500 per patient, a remarkable achievement made possible through the inspiring commitment and investment from our statewide volunteers and partners.

*The Clinic is effective.* In the past year, over 5,000 uninsured, working poor and low-income Rhode Islanders received more than 13,000 patient visits and 18,000 free prescriptions. The Clinic mobilized over 700 volunteers and community partners statewide, and accepted hundreds of new patients through our Open Enrollment system. All of this was achieved with a lean staff of 8 full-time equivalents, 6 AmeriCorps VISTAs, and an active and engaged Board.

*The Clinic is efficient.* Funding is leveraged 5 times over. With an annual budget of just \$1.4 million donated entirely from individuals, corporations, and foundations, the Clinic leverages over \$6.8 million in additional health resources. Of the Clinic's \$1.4 million annual budget (100% raised every year), 90% goes directly to health and education programs. Only 10% is used for fundraising and administration.

*The Clinic advances our State's goal to reduce health care costs in Rhode Island* by treating patients who would otherwise present at emergency rooms. The Clinic annually diverts over 600 emergency room visits for uninsured, low-income adults, saving emergency room uncompensated care costs of \$3.9 million (Brown School of Public Health).

## **CONCLUSION**

Our definition of success is 3-pronged:

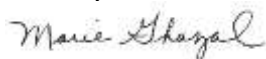
- 1.) Barriers to care are reduced for uninsured adults through increased access and education;
- 2.) Clinic patients receive coordinated Medical Home Care they need to get and stay healthy; and,
- 3.) The Clinic operates as effectively and efficiently as possible to serve uninsured, low-income adults throughout RI, and as a demonstration Volunteer Model in the US to reduce health care costs overall.

We are grateful for your leadership investment to enable the Clinic to strategically implement our Plan, and leverage additional funds to increase access.

Your partnership to further this Plan will provide uninsured adults throughout RI with access to comprehensive services they need to get and stay well. We are grateful for your thoughtful consideration of this request, and look forward to providing you with any other information that may lead to a favorable response.

I would be pleased to speak with you and provide any additional information. I can be reached by *cell*: 401-464-1014, or *email*: [mghazal@rifreeclinic.org](mailto:mghazal@rifreeclinic.org).

Sincerely,



Marie Ghazal, DNP, RN, FAAN  
Chief Executive Officer