

## 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 Public Health Institute (RIPHI)

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

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Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

RIPHI seeks \$600,000 for building for its LGBTQ+ Clinic, Open Door Health

Total request: \$ 600,000

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 \_\_\_\_\_



**RIPHI** RHODE ISLAND  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
INSTITUTE



**American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendations  
Presented to The Rhode Island State Legislature**

**Date Delivered: November 11, 2021**

**Request: Rhode Island Public Health Institute seeks \$600,000 for a new building for Open Door Health, the state's only LGBTQ+ Clinic**

**Executive Summary**

**The Rhode Island Public Health Institute (RIPHI) requests ARPA support to purchase a new building for the state's only LGBTQ+ clinic, Open Door Health (ODH).** LGBTQ+ populations were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic because they are disproportionately represented in the hospitality and service industries. LGBTQ+ populations were also impacted because they are more likely to be afflicted with chronic and infectious diseases, and mental health and addiction disease burdens.



**ODH is the first and only LGBTQ+ clinic in the state of Rhode Island.** Open Door Health opened in 2020 and rapidly grew, now serving approximately 3,000 patients. ODH is currently located at 7 Central Street on the West Side of Providence in the Pearl Street lofts. We rent this building at 7 Central Street. ODH has now outgrown this space and needs a new building to enable us to meet the need of our growing patient volume and to expand the suite of services we offer to include behavioral and mental health services.

RIPHI's mission is to eliminate health disparities in Rhode Island and beyond. We have multiple public health programs and serve approximately 10,000 individuals across Rhode Island. Half of RIPHI clients and patients are Latinx. Learn more about RIPHI and ODH at [www.riphi.org](http://www.riphi.org) and [www.odhpvd.org](http://www.odhpvd.org).

Inclusion and health equity are the cornerstones of all RIPHI programs. RIPHI's clinical initiative, **Open Door Health (ODH), is Rhode Island's first and only primary and sexual health clinic dedicated to serving the LGBTQ+ community as a core function of its mission.** Many LGBTQ+ populations lack access to culturally congruent health care and experience suboptimal health outcomes for mental health, chronic and infectious diseases (i.e., HIV and other sexually

transmitted infections). **These challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic; the economic crisis disproportionately affected LGBTQ+ population. Also, approximately 40% of our patients identify as Latinx; the Latinx community has also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.**

In June 2020, ODH opened one of the few bilingual COVID-19 testing sites on the West Side of Providence. That program attracted diverse Rhode Islanders, including many Latinx individuals who reside in our surrounding community. Our work was featured in a CDC publication about effectively reducing barriers to COVID-19 testing services for Latinx populations. We have since expanded our services to include adult and pediatric COVID-19 vaccination services.



### **History and Rapid Growth of Open Door Health**

ODH opened on March 2, 2020, in response to community member feedback regarding the need for high-quality, coordinated health services for LGBTQ+ Rhode Islanders. Our anchor and seed funding were supported with grants from RI EOHHS, Champlin Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island.

Since opening in 2020, we have served approximately 3,000 unique patients for primary care and sexual health services, including for COVID-19 testing and vaccination. Many of these individuals have not been in medical care of any kind for years. Nearly 40% of our patients identify as Latinx; we offer bilingual and bicultural services to our Latinx patients.

ODH is currently located between the West End and South Side neighborhoods of Providence. This neighborhood is a medically underserved community with among the highest rates of substance use, mental health disorders, HIV, Hepatitis C virus (HCV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Limited affordable housing and food insecurity are also big challenges. ODH is now located in a federally designated Low Income Population Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for Primary Care and Mental Health. We hope to continue offering services to this community and nearby neighborhoods when we purchase a new building in Zipcode 02908, which is also a HPSA.



### **RIPHI and ODH Leadership Team**

Dr. Amy Nunn is the Executive Director of RIPHI and ODH. Dr. Philip Chan is our Chief Medical Officer and Dr. Matthew Murphy is ODH medical Director (see photo of ODH team). Our staff also reflect the diverse community that we serve. Dr. Nunn and Dr. Chan have more than a decade of experience addressing public health problems in Rhode Island including Hepatitis C, HIV/STI prevention and care,

food access and security, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Murphy also provides care at the Adult Correctional Institute (ACI) as well as receiving and caring for prisoners with addiction medicine and primary care services at ODH immediately after their release from prison or jail.

### **Commitment to LGBTQ Community**

**ODH provides primary and sexual health care, including chronic disease management, preventive healthcare, sexual health screening, gender affirming care, HIV, STI, and HCV screening and treatment, and adolescent services to people aged 16 and older.** We work with all major insurance plans, and we are committed to caring for everyone who walks through our doors without regard for their ability to pay. Sixteen percent of Open Door Health patients are uninsured, which is four times the uninsured rate statewide. Approximately 17% of our patients live below the poverty line. ODH offers a sliding scale program based on income and household size; 20% of our patients participate in this program.

The overwhelming majority of ODH patients identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community: 39% identify as being a sexual minority (e.g., asexual, gay, queer, bisexual, etc.), 9% identify as gender nonbinary or gender nonconforming, and 23% of patients are transgender (e.g., do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth). Notably, ODH's inclusion policies have attracted heterosexual populations as well; 30% of our patients identify as heterosexual. Approximately 40% of ODH patients identify as Latinx.

In 2021, in partnership with the Avenue Concept, ODH commissioned a mural by gay artist Brian Kenny. This mural (see photo) features notable members of the Providence LGBTQ+ community and symbolizes our commitment to elevating the voices of Rhode Island's LGBTQ+ community.



### **Rapid Growth of ODH Prompts Need for Larger Space**

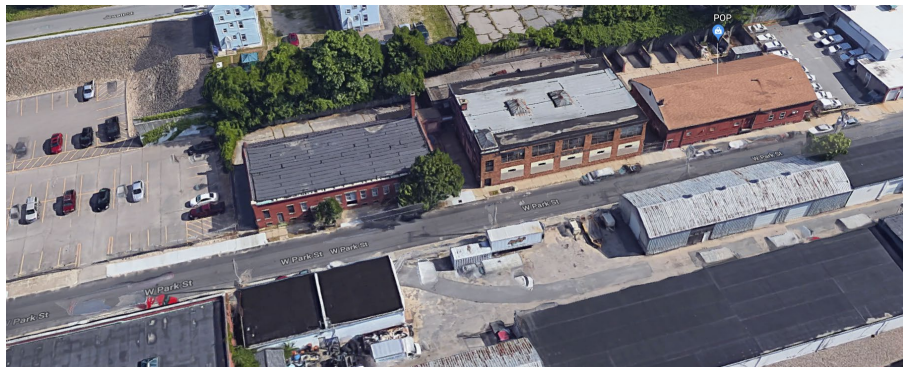
In just one and a half years, ODH has outgrown its rental space at 7 Central Street. Our existing space also constrains our ability to provide services to the volume of patients now seeking services at ODH. Buying and renovating a new building will also allow us to expand our services to provide new mental and behavioral health services. Mental and behavioral health services are in high demand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for the LGBTQ+ and Latinx communities.

When developing the clinical infrastructure and conducting site renovations prior to opening, we anticipated a significant volume of LGBTQ+ community members and neighborhood residents who would seek healthcare services at ODH. However, we did not anticipate the exponential increase in volume that we experienced during the last 20 months.



Funding from this request will support purchase of a new building for Open Door Health at 235 West Park Street (see photo). This building is for sale for \$2.1 million; **we propose that \$600,000 in ARPA funds be used to support purchase of this building to enable us to expand our services.** We request \$600,000 to help finance purchase and renovation of a building at 235 West Hall Street. This new building will help us expand the capacity of ODH staff and providers to more effectively meet the needs of everyone seeking care at ODH. These activities support RIPHI's priorities and mission by increasing access to comprehensive, affirming health care services for the diverse populations we serve. RIPHI will use revenue from clinical operations, private philanthropy, grants, and private financing to pay for the remainder of the building expenses.

**Arial Image of 235 West Park Street in Providence, RI 02908  
proposed new site for Open Door Health**



**In summary, we are requesting funding for a new building to support LGBTQ+ and Latinx health in the state of Rhode Island.** This investment will increase capacity for primary care, sexual health, and mental health services for LGBTQ+ and Latinx Rhode Islanders. This expansion will also support creation of new jobs focused on serving these populations.