



Media release

## Nonprofits share \$100,000 in first round of Vax Challenge grants

Ten nonprofits from across Rhode Island will receive \$10,000 apiece in the first round of funding from the Vax Challenge, which awards grants to nonprofits on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic every time an additional 5,000 Rhode Islanders are vaccinated.

By Chris Barnett | July 19, 2021

**“T**his is a win-win for the State of Rhode Island and all of our community members,” said Gov. Dan McKee. “Through the RI Gives Vax Challenge, we’re getting healthier, we’re raising awareness and we’re able to help the organizations that support those most in need each and every day. If you haven’t gotten your vaccine yet, please walk up or drive up today or make an appointment through [vaccinateri.org](https://vaccinateri.org).”

Jointly established by McKee, the Rhode Island Commerce Department, the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Rhode Island Foundation in early July, the Vax Challenge encourages Rhode Islanders to get vaccinated by offering grants to nonprofits that supported the general COVID-19 response and recovery.

**“Hitting the first vaccination milestone and making the initial round of grants is a great start. Every new person who gets vaccinated against COVID brings us closer to awarding the next \$120,000 to the nonprofits that are doing so much every day to help Rhode Islanders recover from the impact of the pandemic.”**

- Neil D. Steinberg, president and CEO, Rhode Island Foundation

---

The recipients of the initial round of grants are:

**Access To Recovery:** Throughout the pandemic, Access to Recovery helped more than 120 individuals with substance use disorder with financial assistance, housing, basic needs, peer recovery coaching and support.

**Adoption Rhode Island:** Throughout the pandemic, Adoption Rhode Island expanded its services to families and youth to reduce isolation and help address mental and behavioral health challenges as a result of COVID-19. In addition, the organization also provided basic needs support including food, basic needs and housing assistance to clients facing health crises, housing instability and job loss.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Northern Rhode Island:** Throughout the pandemic, the Boys & Girls Clubs provided meals, transportation and educational supports to residents of Woonsocket, Cumberland and other northern R.I. communities. Its food pantry increased its meal and grocery services serving over 300 meals daily to people in need during that time.

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center:** Throughout the pandemic, the MLK Center provided essential food assistance, supported seniors in their struggles to access healthcare, food, and other service; and worked with a local pharmacy to provide an on-site vaccine clinic. The organization served approximately 5,000 last year.

**Elisha Project:** Throughout the pandemic, the Elisha Project delivered fresh and culturally relevant food and household supplies to families in need throughout Rhode Island, particularly those in the hardest hit communities. The organization served approximately 250,000 people last year.

**Pawtucket Soup Kitchen:** Throughout the pandemic, the Pawtucket Soup Kitchen transitioned from on-site meals to delivering food to temporary housing sites and shelters in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and Providence. The organization served approximately 1,000 people last year.

**Refugee Development Center:** Throughout the pandemic, the Refugee Development Center focused its efforts on assisting refugees with food security, financial assistance, and COVID-19 outreach and information. Since the start of the pandemic, the organization has assisted over 1,500 refugees and immigrants, a 400 percent increase compared to pre-COVID activity.

**Rhode Island Free Clinic:** Throughout the pandemic, the Clinic mobilized its Volunteer Medical Corps to provide COVID-19 response care, piloted telehealth services and launched a COVID-19 testing site specifically for adults who had no doctor nor insurance. To date, the clinic has provided more than 10,000 COVID-19 tests and vaccines to vulnerable, low-income people of color.

**Southern Rhode Island Volunteers:** Throughout the pandemic, Southern R.I. Volunteers provided food and other basic needs to homebound seniors in South County.

~~**WARM Center:** The WARM Center provided 34,000 grab-and-go meals to individuals in need in the Washington County area during the first year of the pandemic. It also provided hotel vouchers and essential temporary housing while working to find permanent housing solutions for hundreds of South County residents.~~

**“This program is not only helping to encourage new vaccinations – it's also helping to support the small nonprofits that are making a big difference as Rhode Island recovers from the COVID crisis. We thank Governor Dan McKee, the Rhode Island Foundation and our state's nonprofit community for collaborating on this innovative and important program.”**

- Rhode Island Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor

---

The budget for the fund is \$750,000 to be allocated in grants of \$10,000 to Rhode Island 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. The state provided \$500,000 and the Foundation contributed \$250,000. Up to an additional four rounds of grants could be awarded each time Rhode Island administers an additional 5,000 first COVID-19 vaccine doses as reported by the Rhode Island Department of Health.

“Getting your COVID-19 vaccine is a way to keep yourself and your loved ones healthier and safer, and a way to support the critical network of nonprofit organizations that have been doing so much for Rhode Islanders since day one of this pandemic,” said Director of Health Nicole Alexander-Scott. “Hitting this RI Gives Vax Challenge benchmark is great, but we have a lot more vaccinating to do. It’s never been easier to get a shot. If you have not been vaccinated yet, do your part and get vaccinated today.”

The Rhode Island Foundation will accept applications from interested nonprofits at [rifoundation.org/vax](https://rifoundation.org/vax) through July 30.

The remaining schedule for award disbursements will coincide with COVID-19 vaccination increments of 5,000 as follows: \$120,000 will be distributed for the second additional 5,000 first dose COVID-19 vaccines administered (12 awards); \$150,000 will be distributed for the third additional 5,000 first dose COVID-19 vaccines administered (15 awards); \$180,000 will be distributed for the fourth additional 5,000 first dose COVID-19 vaccines administered (18 awards); and \$200,000 will be distributed for the fifth round of additional 5,000 first dose COVID-19 vaccines administered (20 awards).

Eligible applicants must be 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations located in Rhode Island. While the State and partners recognize the impacts of large nonprofits, these grants are designed to support nonprofits with annual operating budgets of less than \$3,000,000 in 2020. Applicants must provide services or direct assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impacts on individuals or communities. Such organizations may provide services in categories such as health, basic needs or children and youth. Examples include behavioral health services, food insecurity and programs that address learning loss.

The Rhode Island Foundation staff will review and determine whether applicant organizations meet the eligibility requirements of the program. As each milestone is reached, Rhode Island Foundation staff will enter eligible applications into a lottery to make selections for grant awards.

To learn more about vaccinations and to sign up today, visit [vaccinateri.gov](https://vaccinateri.gov). The RI Gives Vax Challenge Tracker can be found here: <https://ri-department-of-health-covid-19-vaccine-incentive-rihealth.hub.arcgis.com/>

## More from Media releases



### Media release

Nonprofits receive  
\$350,000 to serve  
Newport County  
residents

July 18, 2022



### Media release

Rhode Island PBS  
announces recipient of  
\$60,000 journalism  
scholarship

July 14, 2022

Together RI

**Media release**

Rhode Island  
Foundation to re-launch  
statewide initiative to  
bring people together  
face-to-face to talk and  
listen

June 24, 2022