

Healthy and Strong Communities

We work for equitable access, use, and quality of healthcare, expanding collaborations that address social determinants of health, workforce needs, healthcare costs, and the overall health and well-being of all Rhode Islanders.

Access to high-quality, affordable, sustainable, and culturally appropriate healthcare is critical to the health of Rhode Island as a whole. More than that, it's a fundamental right.

Focus Areas

- Improving equitable access, utilization, and/or coordination of primary care and behavioral health care services, with particular focus on ensuring a robust and representative workforce across diverse care settings.
- Supporting efforts to mitigate key health disparities that focus on addressing underlying root causes, shifting institutional practices, and/or advancing systemic reform.
- Sustaining and expanding comprehensive community-based efforts that help individuals and families meet their basic needs and address inequities in the determinants of health for historically marginalized communities.
- Innovative, collaborative initiatives beyond the stated focus areas with the potential to drive greater impact on healthy and strong communities – particularly those with an equity focus and/or advancing solutions across multiple community priorities.

Case Studies

Street Medicine

In collaboration with Brown University Health we funded an innovative Street Medicine (SM) program to deliver acute care and build trust between the medical community and unsheltered individuals. Through the program, Dr. Rebecca Karb, an emergency medicine doctor, and Megan Smith, PhD, an assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Rhode Island College are taking medicine to the streets.

The Foundation funded this program in December 2022 with a \$134,000 grant.

Homelessness and health influence one another through multiple reinforcing mechanisms. People experiencing homelessness are susceptible to the same issues as people who are not—and then some—and their living conditions tend to make treating the issues much more difficult.

Now, Brown University Health is attempting to bring high-quality healthcare out of clinics and hospitals into the community by meeting people where they are—in parks, encampments, under bridges, abandoned buildings, and cars. Complementing the outreach work that organizations like House of Hope and Project Weber/RENEW have been doing for some time.

Healthy & Safe Providence

The Healthy and Safe Providence Fund was launched in 2021 by the Rhode Island Foundation, in partnership with the Downtown Improvement District and the Providence Foundation to support evidence-informed outreach work, aimed at providing behavioral health, basic

needs, and housing placement services to individuals in need in the downtown area. The fund supports expansion of the Downtown Improvement District's Clean and Safe Team to work collaboratively with outreach workers and local businesses, as employees and visitors travel in and around the downtown Providence area. Grantees of the Healthy and Safe Providence Fund were selected by the Rhode Island Foundation's experienced grantmaking team and were partnered directly with Crossroads' citywide mobile diversion program so that the services and supports offered are complementary.

Through Summer 2024 more than \$425,000 in grants have been awarded to the DID, Project Weber/RENEW, Crossroads, and Providence Center. Of the total, Rhode Island Foundation has contributed more than \$150,000 in discretionary funding. The rest of the funding was raised from individuals, institutions, and local businesses.

Healthy and Safe Providence emphasizes collaboration between the grantee organizations – Crossroads, the DID, Project Weber/RENEW, and Providence Center. Grantees directly served 2,652 people downtown through outreach, case management services, and direct payments of basic needs and housing support.

Healthy & Safe Providence grantees also partnered with the following agencies and institutions throughout this effort: Haus of Codec, Trinity Repertory Company, Downtown Overdose Stakeholders, Providence Public Library, Providence VA, Providence Police Dept, Butler Hospital, Project Hunker Down, Roger Williams Park Zoo, Providence Parks Dept, Providence Fire Department, DARE, Providence Community Libraries, Amtrak Police, Family Service of RI, DCYF, Lifespan, RI Colleges and University – Directors of Security, Building Futures, Providence Police, and Amos House.