

**Request for Action
By
Board of Commissioners**

Approval of Bridging the Digital Divide Program Funding Awards

1. Summary of Request

This Request for Action (“RFA”) is for approval of grant funding under the Bridging the Digital Divide Program (“Digital Divide”). The Board of Commissioners of Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) approved up to \$250,000 in Digital Divide funding as part of the program budget for fiscal year 2021.

The RIHousing Digital Divide program provides funding for one or both of the following activities:

- Creating infrastructure needed for internet access
- Providing free or low-cost WiFi for people in their homes

RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for awards of Digital Divide funding in February 2021. The RFP was posted on the RIHousing website, the State of Rhode Island Division of Purchasing website, social media, and sent directly to approximately 960 organizations, municipalities, property managers, developers and interested parties via an email announcement. A press release was also issued to local media outlets. RIHousing received 20 proposals in response to the RFP from 20 applicants representing service organizations, housing developers, public housing authorities, municipalities, a university, and privately owned entities. Funding requested totaled \$969,904.

A committee consisting of the Deputy Executive Director and staff from the Executive Division, Development Division, and Leased Housing and Rental Services Division conducted a review of each proposal in accordance with the ranking criteria set forth in the RFP. The committee is recommending funding be awarded to the projects and programs described at Attachment A.

2. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the resolution authorizing Digital Divide funding in the amount of \$250,000 for the projects and programs set forth at Attachment A be approved.

3. Attachments

- A. Recommended FY2021 Bridging the Digital Divide Program Funding Awards
- B. Resolution

Attachment A

Proposed FY 2021 Bridging the Digital Divide Program Funding Awards

Organization	Program or Project	Location	Award
City of Central Falls	Mobile hot spots and payment for hot spots	Central Falls	\$50,000
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley	Outdoor public WiFi; upgraded hardware for youth centers; devices, WiFi and digital literacy for seniors	Northern Rhode Island	\$75,000
Newport Housing Authority	Expanded WiFi for public housing residents	Newport	\$75,000
University of Rhode Island	Devices and digital literacy via URI students for seniors	East Greenwich, Jamestown, Newport, North Kingstown, North Smithfield, South Kingstown, Providence	\$50,000
		TOTAL	\$250,000

Attachment B
Resolution of the Board of Commissioners
of
Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation

- WHEREAS:** Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) created the Bridging the Digital Divide Program to expand internet access for low-and-moderate income Rhode Islanders; and
- WHEREAS:** RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals under a competitive process to seek applications for Bridging the Digital Divide Program grant funding; and
- WHEREAS:** RIHousing received twenty (20) complete proposals for Bridging the Digital Divide Program funding; and
- WHEREAS:** staff reviewed the proposals according to the ranking criteria outlined in the Request for Proposals and have determined that four (4) of the proposed programs best fit the criteria of the program.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY:

- RESOLVED:** that the programs set forth at Attachment A be, and hereby are approved for grant funding under the Bridging the Digital Divide Program in up to the amounts specified at Attachment A, subject to any administrative adjustments as the Executive Director determines to be in the best interests of RIHousing, provided that the total amount awarded to all recipients shall not exceed \$250,000.
- RESOLVED:** that all funds awarded hereunder shall be funded out of the FY 2021 budget.
- RESOLVED:** that the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director, each acting singly, be and hereby is authorized and empowered to take any and all actions necessary or desirable to carry out the foregoing resolutions.