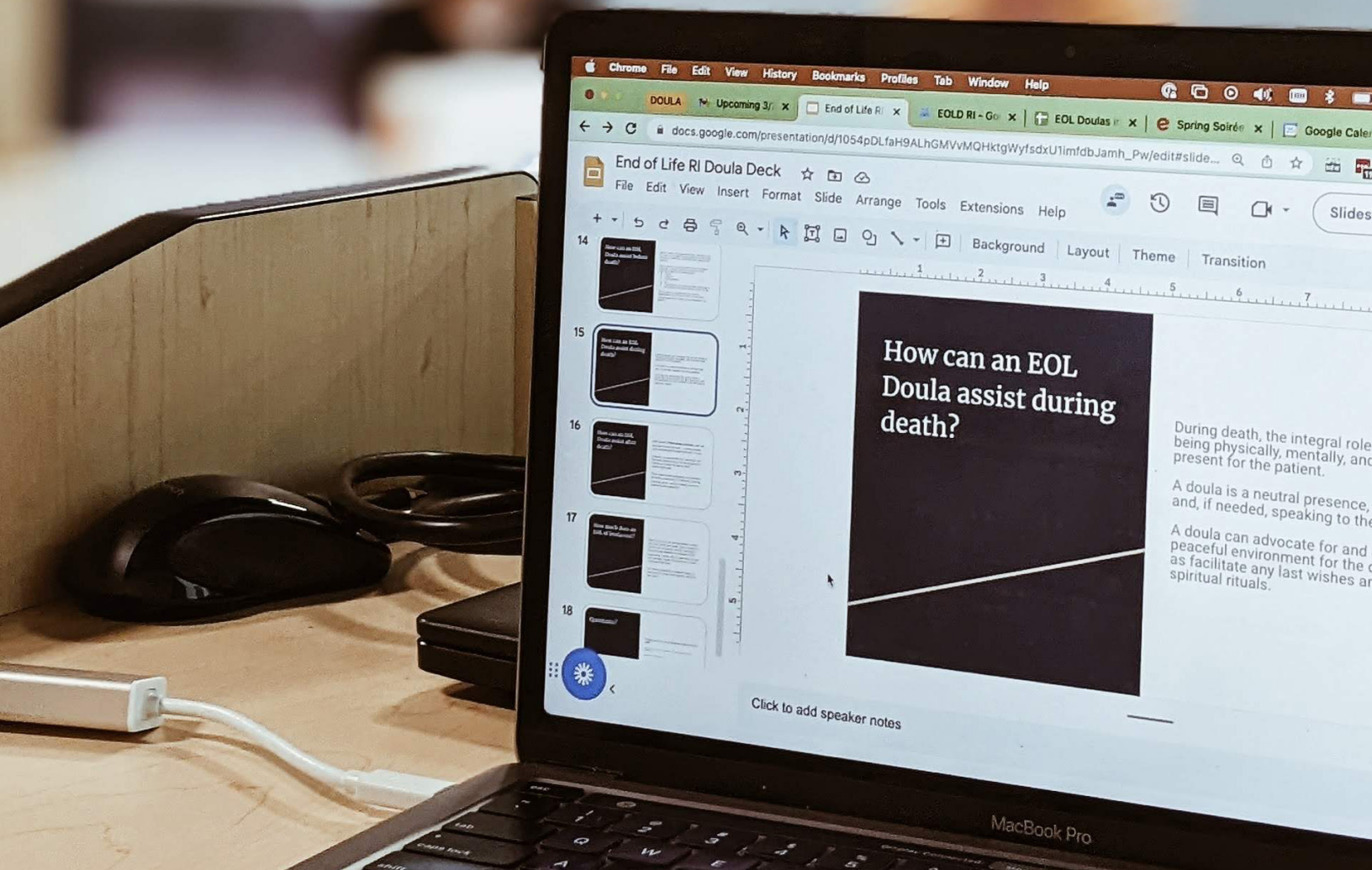


Strategic Plan 2025 through 2026



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End of Life RI Doula Deck

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Background Layout Theme Transition

14 How can an EOL Doula assist during death?

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18 Questions?

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How can an EOL Doula assist during death?

During death, the integral role of a doula is being physically, mentally, and emotionally present for the patient.

A doula is a neutral presence, offering support and, if needed, speaking to the patient.

A doula can advocate for and facilitate a peaceful environment for the patient, as well as facilitate any last wishes and spiritual rituals.

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Companioning is about going into the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

INTRODUCTION

Herstory/History & Strategic Planning

End of Life Rhode Island (EOLRI) is grounded in the woven experience of its members' skills, training and expertise. United by our life interests and profound experiences, we share a heart-centered dedication to doing death better. Both spiritual and secular, we are a resource and comfort to those facing the end of life. Our skills are based in traditional and non-traditional death care, legacy work, holistic practices, rituals and ceremony. Rooted in compassion and open-mindedness, we share a commitment to meet each person where they are at, knowing that each life and death is unique.

In 2022 EOLRI was founded by two certified End of Life Doulas, Julia Brough and Judith Sutphen, with the hope of creating a network of like-minded professionals who share an interest in supporting and advocating end of life care in Rhode Island.

Early efforts included bi-weekly meetings at the Warwick Public Library with regular attendance, the creation of a public presentation titled "Walking Each Other Home: What is an End of Life Doula?", and the establishment of a website, Instagram account, and email network.

Over time, EOLRI established a rhythm of alternating public awareness outreach with internal education sessions for participants. Presentations expanded to libraries, community organizations, and specialized venues such as the Providence Rotary and Swan Point Cemetery. Collaborations with professionals in hospice care, elder law, and funeral advocacy further enriched their work. Membership grew steadily, with an active email listserv now connecting around 60 members.

As EOLRI grew, the need for a strategic plan became clear. Julia and Judith recognized the importance of a formal structure with clear goals. They invited Debra Dallesandro and Katharine Rossi, who are also End of Life Doulas, to join the Strategic Planning team. Over a three-month planning process in late 2024, with facilitation from Katherine Brown and input from other stakeholders, the team completed this 2025-2026 Strategic Plan.

Looking ahead, EOLRI remains dedicated to fostering growth, inclusivity, and providing education to enhance meaningful end of life care support across Rhode Island.





WHERE WE ARE NOW

Mission

To educate the public about the role of the end of life doula as well as raise public awareness around death, dying, and the emerging end of life planning and support options in Rhode Island.

You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.

Dame Cicely Saunders

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Current Structure, Leadership, & Decision-Making

EOLRI is an informal collaborative run by a team of dedicated volunteers who, since its inception in 2022 continue to step up to ensure that the collaborative can function and grow. The EOLRI operations are relatively simple and straightforward at this time.

Over the past 2 years the EOLRI listserv has grown to 60, largely through our members' personal networks and outreach efforts focused on establishing connections with the death care community.

EOLRI co-founders, Judith and Julia, have taken on leadership responsibility for coordinating the collaborative's activities, either by doing or delegating what needs to be done. For instance, the co-leaders create meeting agendas, with input from members, and facilitate EOLRI's monthly membership meetings. Julia maintains an electronic log of meeting agendas to track ongoing events and commitments from meeting to meeting, with updates at each meeting. Julia created and maintains the EOLRI website, digital art creation and posting on social media.

The organization has enjoyed participating at various local conferences and presenting **What Is an End of Life Doula?** to community organizations. All collaborative expenses are paid/donated by members out-of-pocket. There is no formalized bank account or process for reimbursement yet.

The EOLRI co-leaders have handled decision-making and coordination of programs and outreach, appreciating help from our informal "second ring" of members, Debra Dallesandro, Katharine Rossi, and Maryann Donohue-Lynch, as needed. The EOLRI co-leaders readily welcome the opportunity to delegate to others with the required skill sets, such as has been the case with co-leading presentations, development of digital & printed content, and brainstorming on event ideas.

The EOLRI co-leadership model for decision-making, programming, and operations has been essential for getting off the ground, and it is working pretty well so far. However, it is not clear if this is the most effective leadership structure for future growth. Judith and Julia remain committed to continuing their leadership roles but fully welcome others' meaningful participation, and look forward to sharing responsibility and authority with other members. How to do this and what it would look like have been good questions for our Strategic Planning process to explore and decide.

Similarly, the Strategic Planning process will explore appropriate financial and legal structures that best fit the collaborative's vision.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Current Resources

The most valuable resource we have is our members who are committed to providing support to individuals and their loved ones as they face the end of life. Our collaborative is fortunate to have diverse secular, religious and spiritual professionals who offer a variety of care and support, including traditional death care, art, holistic practices, herbalism, creating rituals for life passages, hospice work, meditation, Reiki, breathwork, grief education, providing spiritual direction, public speaking, conflict resolution and advance care planning. They understand that each death is unique and are dedicated to helping people navigate through this inevitable chapter of life so they can experience comfort and peace.

EOLRI resources also include our co-leaders, each are trained end of life doulas, who share leadership for operations, programming, and development. Each brings complementing leadership styles: Julia brings strong tech and project management skills; Judith brings a strong nonprofit administrative background. Both Julia and Judith are catalyzed by bringing new ideas to the culture, and are strong public speakers and writers. They communicate and work well together.

EOLRI currently has no budget. Annual website hosting, domain, & SSL certificate costs and poster board and markers have come out of Julia's and Judith's pockets (\$250/yr) along with the printing of rack cards (\$210). We've gotten a few honorariums (\$60, max) and a donation (\$200) which have helped reimburse these expenses.

EOLRI holds regular in-person/virtual meetings on Tuesday evenings 6-7pm which take place at the Warwick Public Library. Administrative operations rely entirely on members for their computers, phones, wifi, meeting space, and other support from their own homes.





WHERE WE WANT TO BE BY THE END OF 2026

1. New Leadership Structure

Over the course of the strategic planning process, the Strategic Planning team reached agreement that EOLRI needed to redefine and expand our leadership structure.

We created a Leadership Council to support co-leaders, Julia Brough and Judith Sutphen. Joining Judith and Julia, the other Leadership Council members include Katharine Rossi and Debra Dallesandro. To benefit from the expertise of additional EOLRI members, the Strategic Planning team also established three committees: Marketing, Professional Education, and Public Outreach.

Co-Leader Roles

- Judith Sutphen: sage/crone and speaker. She will coordinate an exploration into the EOLRI legal and financial structure with assistance from committee members.
 - E.g. Should EOLRI become a non-profit organization (and if so, which type?) or arrange a fiscal sponsorship under another organization? What would it mean to be a collective, collaborative, or cooperative organization, and which seems most appropriate for EOLRI?
- Julia Brough: administrator and speaker. She will continue to handle the EOLRI administrative tasks and the outreach with assistance from members of the Marketing Committee.

Leadership Council Roles

- Complete the EOLRI Strategic Plan
- Coordinate Committees
- Define what EOLRI membership entails
- Decide the EOLRI legal structure
- Manage budget and fundraising
- Review quarterly progress towards 2025-2026 goals & objectives
- Provide program and fiscal oversight

WHERE WE WANT TO BE BY THE END OF 2026

1. New Leadership Structure Cont.

Committees

1. Marketing Committee – Coordinator: Julia Brough
 - Develop and maintain creative materials which include and are not limited to the website, social media posts, flyer, rack cards, and program materials.
 - Physically post and share program and organization flyers around the state.
2. Professional Education Committee – Coordinator: Katharine Rossi
 - Set the schedule of educational topics for and coordinate the EOLRI monthly meetings, including:
 - Inviting, hosting speakers, and sending follow-up thank you notes
 - Coordinating with co-leaders about how the speaker will dovetail with other monthly meeting agenda items, and meeting logistics (e.g. location, seating, snacks, etc)
 - Coordinating with the Marketing Committee to handle outreach that includes the educational topic (e.g. title, speaker bio, etc.)
3. Public Outreach Committee – Coordinator: Judith Sutphen
 - Plan for and coordinate the,
 - Scheduling of opportunities to raise public awareness about the end of life doula’s contributions to the dying experience
 - Building relationships with hospice

2. Membership

EOLRI’s strategic planning process identified the key priority of continuing to build an engaged membership base over the next two years. We defined two levels of EOLRI membership, specifically:

- **EOLRI Members** are end of life doulas who support the EOLRI mission and are residents of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, or they are people in these states who are interested in becoming an end of life doula.
 - Members will need to provide proof of training, certification and/or experience
 - Members contact information will be listed on the EOLRI website
- **Friends of EOLRI Members** are people who are interested in supporting the work of end of life doulas.

Death avoidance is not an individual failing; it’s a cultural one.

Caitlin Doughty

WHERE WE WANT TO BE BY THE END OF 2026

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives will guide the EOLRI work over the next two years. The EOLRI Leadership Council will prepare a detailed work plan in support of each objective on an annual basis. The Leadership Council will meet twice a year, on or around the Solstices, to monitor progress in accomplishing these goals and objectives, while ensuring we remain true to the EOLRI mission.

- **Convene** and consistently support EOLRI learners and practitioners.
 - **Provide** educational programs monthly, attended by at least 12 people each time
 - **Create** an EOLRI member toolkit and resource guide
 - **Collect** an archive of at least 20 stories of EOLRI members for website and public outreach presentations
 - **Provide** an open and supportive forum for EOLRI members as an explicit desired outcome of each monthly meeting
- **Offer** public education about end of life doulas as providers of care and support for the dying person and their loved ones before, during, and after death, to increase recognition of this valued community resource.
 - **Schedule** at least six public speaking engagements per year
 - **Train and support** at least six speakers, representing each Rhode Island county, to provide public speaking engagements
 - **Promote** end of life doula presence at home, hospital, and hospice
 - **Define and cultivate** a positive working relationship with at least one funeral home by December 2026
- **Establish** the EOLRI organizational structure in support of internal programming and external community networking.
 - **Implement** Co-leaders and Leadership Council roles and responsibilities (see Leadership Structure on page 6)
 - **Activate** Marketing, Public Outreach, and Professional Education Committees' responsibilities and recruit at least two additional committee volunteers for each committee
 - **Create** new Organizational Structure page on the website to outline the names, roles and functions of the Co-leaders, Leadership Council, and Committee members
 - **Define** what EOLRI membership levels entail and increase active membership to at least 30
 - **Determine** the EOLRI legal structure
 - **Create** an annual budget and raise sufficient funds.
 - **Create** a database to store and manage information about Membership, Educational Programs, and Community Partners

A PAGE FOR YOU

Notes

Thank you for the support! We are excited you have had the opportunity to learn about EOLRI. Here's a space for you to jot down resources and/or reminders that may have come up during a conversation with us.

