

**ROOT CAUSES.
UNITED SOLUTIONS.**

LIVE UNITED 2025
Strategic Plan, January 2021



United Way Rhode Island



BACKGROUND

"If you want to be a true professional, you will do something outside yourself. Something to repair tears in your community. Something to make life a little better for people less fortunate than you. That's what I think a meaningful life is – living not for oneself, but for one's community."

— Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg

From our inception in 1926, United Way of Rhode Island has effectively moved people from crisis to stability while working to shore up the systems that provide support across the community. And, when called to action in the face of a global pandemic, we proved that we were built over the last 95 years to be the best organization in the state to effectively harness resources from government, corporations, nonprofits and individuals to address the many major crises affecting all of us.

Last year also spotlighted the realization for us, and everyone involved, that the war on poverty for the past 50 years has been ineffective in creating opportunity and prosperity for all members of our community. The pandemic showed that where you live and the color of your skin is a powerful determinant of your likelihood to live or die from COVID-19. And, murders of our neighbors like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor remind us that Black Rhode Islanders are eight times as likely to be in jail as whites. You'll see many more examples of disparities in this report.

That's why we feel it's so important in this plan to explicitly address systemic inequity – i.e., policies that promote unequal opportunity and treatment of people of color. We know it's the right thing to do morally. It's also the smart thing to do economically.

After all, we've been taught that race shouldn't matter, but the data tells a different story. The data shows that systemic inequities are the root causes of intergenerational poverty among people of color. And, despite our best efforts through broad support of our communities in need, we know that our progress is hampered by these systemic inequities. Until we can make sure everyone has an equal shot at the starting line, our work will never reach its full potential.

We hope you'll join us in this journey to make sure Rhode Island is a place where every individual in each community has equal opportunity for justice and prosperity.

INTRODUCTION

The LIVE UNITED 2025 strategic plan aligns United Way of Rhode Island’s rich legacy with an intention to be transformational. It is rooted in data and guided by feedback from thousands of Rhode Islanders over the past few years. We are abundantly grateful to the thousands of individuals who contributed to the transformative plan that will guide our important work together and to those who support us.

This plan will require United Way of Rhode Island to go “deep, rather than wide,” with investments and partners, to target the root causes that have thwarted Rhode Island’s ability to thrive. While we serve all Rhode Islanders in need, this plan will tackle Rhode Island’s great challenge, reversing the racial inequities that have plagued Rhode Island’s Black and brown communities for generations. In order to “Live United,” we must dismantle systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities. We commit to leveraging all of our assets (i.e., advocacy, convening, fundraising, strategic investments, awareness building) to create a more equitable Rhode Island.

The LIVE UNITED 2025 strategic plan will guide United Way of Rhode Island’s next five years from 2020 until 2025, just in time for our centennial celebration.

Our Vision

A Rhode Island where every individual in each community has equal opportunity for justice and prosperity.

Our Mission

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

Today, the disparities are everywhere you turn.



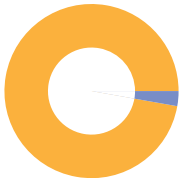
For every \$1 in median income for a white household, the median Black household realizes 57 cents.



Blacks are 1.7x likely to be unemployed and/or underemployed compared to whites.



Only 1 out of the 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island is considered affordable.



Only 3% of Rhode Island nonprofits are led by persons of color.

Sources: Economic Progress Institute, HousingWorks RI, AFP-Rhode Island

WHAT WE HEARD

In the summer of 2019, the organization launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to develop the next vision for our organization. We sought to create spaces where every Rhode Island resident had an ability to contribute. In August 2019, United Way hosted Community FIRST Conversations, 45 small-group conversations with eight to ten neighbors sharing their insights on how to strengthen our state. These 45 Community FIRST Conversations were held across the state, in places of worship, nonprofit organizations, community spaces, homes, corporations and other venues.

The demographic makeup of the 450+ attendees appropriately represented the Rhode Island community, including youth (18 years and under), which represented 12.8% of attendees. Attendees represented nearly every city and town in the state.

Attendees displayed a tremendous sense of pride for Rhode Island and the people in it. The strong sense of cultural awareness in the state led many of the key themes. Additionally, the strong sense of community and the work of the nonprofit sector was recognized.

Conversations underscored that families in Rhode Island have been struggling for generations, and this struggle is undermining Rhode Island's ability to thrive. The statistics clearly delineate that building systems and supporting policies where equity is at the center can and should be a priority for the United Way of Rhode Island.

Finally, attendees encouraged United Way of Rhode Island to expand its effort for the state, particularly supporting how it funds and mobilizes the community. Recommendations included supporting grassroots and neighborhood-based organizations, offering transformative as well as transparent funding opportunities, and expanding the culture of philanthropy and civic engagement in Rhode Island.

The following key themes emerged:

Strengthen educational opportunities for children and adults.

Alter policies that perpetuate inequities for people of color.

Promote resiliency in the nonprofit community.

Fund organizations focused on advancing racial and socioeconomic equity.

Make housing safe and affordable for all.

Make it easier for Rhode Islanders to access the services they need.

COVID-19 IMPACT IN RHODE ISLAND

Shortly after the conclusion of the Community FIRST Conversations, COVID-19 arrived at Rhode Island's doorstep. The pandemic brought many challenges to the Rhode Island community, including further validation that negative health and socioeconomic impacts of crises plague people of color at rates that far outpace their white counterparts. Data has shown that this is not just because of health factors, but of the social determinants of health, such as financial stability, housing stability and education.

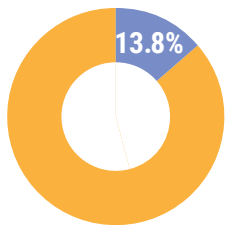
For example, while the Latino population makes up 16% of Rhode Island's population, as of May 25, 2020, 44% of the COVID-19 cases affected our Latino neighbors. Additionally, distance learning presented incredible challenges for students in core cities; a national Pew Research Center study found that during the spring lockdown 36% of low-income parents reported that their children were unable to complete schoolwork at home because they did not have access to a computer, compared to just 4% of upper-income parents.

While data surrounding COVID-19 in Rhode Island strongly validates the systemic racism that plays a role in health and socioeconomic wellbeing in our state, the data surrounding the virus's impact is still being gathered. Much of this strategic plan contains data that represents Rhode Island pre-COVID-19. United Way of Rhode Island will update data to reflect the current needs of the state as it becomes available.

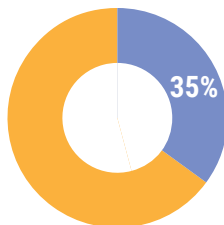




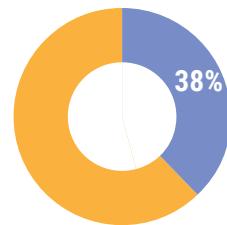
**LIFT
UNITED.**



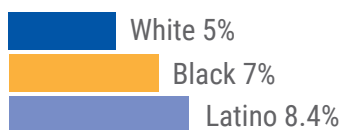
Poverty rate in Rhode Island



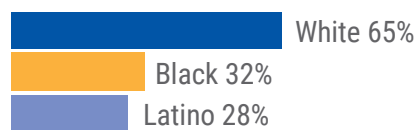
Rhode Islanders considered cost-burdened



Latino children living in poverty in Rhode Island



Unemployment rates in Rhode Island



Home ownership in Rhode Island

THE CHANGE WE SEEK IN OUR COMMUNITY

Housing is a fundamental human right and, today, too many Rhode Islanders are homeless or on the brink of homelessness.

Adult education, job training, and supporting businesses owned by women and minorities

Adult education and job training should be available for all who seek knowledge, but it is particularly important for Rhode Island's multi-language learners. We will strive to expand access to these critical programs and ensure that the programs are training our neighbors for the livable-wage jobs of tomorrow, as well as of today. Additionally, we will support the growth and stability of businesses owned by women and minorities in Rhode Island, which in turn will drive economic growth in our state.

Safe and affordable housing

Housing is a fundamental human right and, today, too many Rhode Islanders are homeless or on the brink of

homelessness. United Way of Rhode Island will invest and advocate for systems and programs that re-imagine housing so that it is safe and affordable for all who live in our state.

Care coordination for 211 callers

When Rhode Islanders call 211, they are in crisis or one step away from a crisis. United Way of Rhode Island will develop a social service care coordination system so that 211 callers will have more comprehensive support and more streamlined access to the resources they need. Improved efficiencies in the social service sector with improved speed of access to services will improve health and wellbeing of Rhode Islanders.

5-year goals

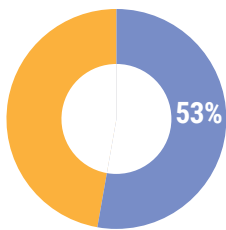
- 1 Double the number of Rhode Island cities and towns that are meeting the 10% affordable housing threshold (with a specific focus on core cities).
- 2 Reduce by 25% the number of people of color who are underemployed or unemployed.
- 3 Increase by 25% the number of individuals enrolled in SNAP benefits based on income (disaggregated by race and/or city or town).

Year 1 planned activities

- 1 Campaign to raise Rhode Island minimum and livable wages.
- 2 Transform 211 technology to v2.0 to build a stronger care coordination system for human services requests in Rhode Island.
- 3 Drive and advocate for investments in job training, workforce development, housing and basic needs organizations that are addressing inequities.



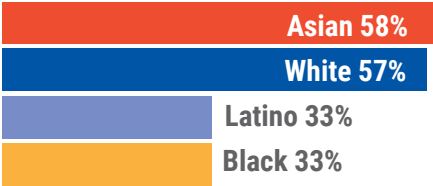
ACHIEVE UNITED.



Rhode Island pre-K children not in school or early-learning programs

37,471

Rhode Island children who do not have access to out-of-school time learning programs



Rhode Island fourth-grade reading proficiency (RICAS English Language Arts Scores)

MAKING EVERY HOUR COUNT FOR ALL OUR KIDS

80% of learning happens outside the classroom.

Literacy

At the beginning of fourth grade, a student makes that all important switch from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” We will continue our focus to inspire children to fall in love with reading and ensure that all Rhode Island children walk into the classroom with the tools to learn. To accomplish this, we must mobilize families and other community members to advocate for more resources for communities that serve a disproportionate number of students not reading at their proper grade level.

Out-of-school time learning

We know that Rhode Islanders are impacted by the environment they live in, and they are impacted by the neighborhoods they live in. We will create a pathway for more youth of color to participate in high quality out-of-school time learning. We will also work to reduce the pathway to prison, using education as a key catalyst.

5-year goals

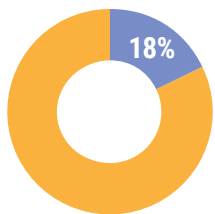
- 1 Double fourth-grade reading proficiency of Rhode Island’s Black and Latino children.
- 2 Increase by 50% access to and participation in out-of-school time learning in low income communities.

Year 1 planned activities

- 1 Campaign to secure state funding for out-of-school time learning programs, specifically in areas with greatest access needs.
- 2 Explore public/private partnerships and funding to increase literacy levels for Rhode Island children.
- 3 Engage youth to brainstorm activities to improve their schools and communities.



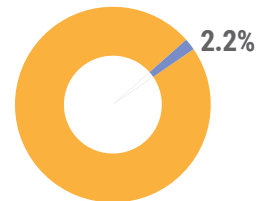
INVEST UNITED.



Rhode Islanders employed by nonprofits

3,500

501(c)3 nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island



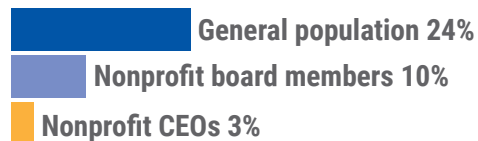
Percentage of income that Rhode Island households give to charity each year

~400

Companies that support United Way of Rhode Island

1,700

People participated in volunteer projects



Representation of people of color in Rhode Island

HARNESSING THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

Nonprofit resiliency and leadership development

Rhode Island nonprofits do not have access to the necessary resources, expertise and data to grow, achieve and sustain their missions. This is especially true of organizations led by and serving people of color.

Working with the nonprofit community, we will co-create programs, products and services that develop a more robust pipeline of leaders of color, build operational efficiencies, encourage collaboration, and support impact measurement.

Empowering donors of today and tomorrow

The philanthropists of tomorrow are serving our community today in so many ways. United Way of Rhode Island intends to create experiences that help donors connect with the mission that is important to them, as well as to provide easy-to-use tools to support their giving and volunteer needs.

Support corporations' role as community champions

Every day, Rhode Island's corporations are giving their time, talents and treasures to strengthen our state. United Way of Rhode Island will continue to provide resources and consultative support to help companies shape and measure the return on their community investment and corporate social responsibility.

Inspiring volunteerism

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any nonprofit organization. When a volunteer participates in a short or long-term project, passions ignite and last a lifetime. We will continue to invest in the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island, connecting more Rhode Islanders with volunteer opportunities and educating our youth on the importance of serving one's community in this way.

5-year goals

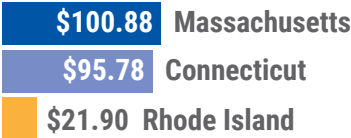
- 1 Increase by 50% the number of Rhode Island nonprofits in stable financial condition, defined as having >3 months of cash reserves.
- 2 Triple the number of nonprofit leaders and board members of color in Rhode Island.
- 3 Invest \$5 million in capacity-building and operational funding for Rhode Island nonprofits.
- 4 Increase by 50% (from 2.2 to 3.3%) the portion of Rhode Island households that contribute to charities.
- 5 Increase by 25% the number of people in Rhode Island who volunteer, with a heightened focus on skills-based volunteerism.

Year 1 planned activities

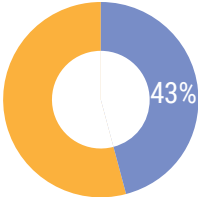
- 1 Create a nonprofit center or association to strengthen professional development and infrastructure capabilities in the sector.
- 2 Implement United Way's Shared Purpose (corporate social responsibility) program in Rhode Island.
- 3 Raise \$1.5 million on April 1, 2021 (401Gives).



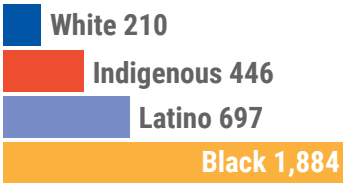
ADVOCATE UNITED.



Per capita investment in affordable housing



Providence voters who participated in the 2016 presidential election



Rhode Islanders incarcerated (per 100,000 people)

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Democracy is not a spectator sport.

Driving systemic change via public policy and research

Equity, particularly racial equity, needs to be at the forefront of decisions in municipal, state and federal policy. Additionally, investments in the most critical areas of need in Rhode Island, such as housing and education, have seen dramatic reductions over the years, rather than improvements in line with demand. United Way of Rhode Island will continue to fight for access to critical services, as well as advocate for equitable representation on state boards and commissions. Finally, we will also expand our data and research efforts to be a state leader in analyzing and evangelizing data pertinent to our mission.

United Way of Rhode Island has long been the leader and early funder of organizations that are bringing innovative ideas to our state. Additionally, we are proud to support community and neighborhood mobilizing organizations that are focused on breaking the barriers to racial equity. We will expand these efforts, as well as expand tools to scale these important missions.

Civic participation

Democracy is not a spectator sport, and United Way of Rhode Island is committed to creating spaces and support that help Rhode Islanders be the best community champions they can be. We will expand existing programs like our Advocacy 101 empowerment program and create new programs that will inspire Rhode Islanders to vote, run for office and advocate for the platforms they are most passionate about.

Criminal justice reform

The incarceration rate in Rhode Island is 361 per 100,000 people. Of the approximately 3,600 Rhode Islanders in prison in 2010, 1,884 were Black, 697 were Latino and 446 were Indigenous. United Way of Rhode Island will work extensively to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline, as well as advocate for policies that help our neighbors get back on their feet during and after incarceration.

5-year goals

- 1 Increase by 50% the number of policies implemented that address equity and social justice.
- 2 Increase by 50% the number of policymakers engaged in equity.
- 3 Increase by 25% voter turnout statewide in the 2024 presidential election, compared to 2016.
- 4 Triple the number of trained advocates.

Year 1 planned activities

- 1 Refine data collection systems and fund research to improve ability to disaggregate data by race and income level.
- 2 Expand United Way of Rhode Island's Advocacy 101 training to be delivered in every city and town in Rhode Island.
- 3 Create a legislative research tool that tracks key equity-focused legislation at the municipal, state and federal level.

THANK YOU



United Way of Rhode Island is abundantly grateful for the community-wide support it has received as it developed this important strategic plan. It was our intention to make the LIVE UNITED 2025 plan “for community, by community.” Our ask was received and acted upon at every point by Rhode Islanders throughout our state.

In particular, United Way of Rhode Island would like to thank the 45+ Community FIRST Conversations hosts, Saul Kaplan and the Business Innovation Factory, and our Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Directors, and Community Advisory Board. In particular, United Way of Rhode Island is most grateful for the leadership of Michele Lederberg (Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island), our board chair, and board members Betsey Purinton (StrategicPoint Investment Advisors) and Junior Jabbie (Banneker Industries), our Strategic Planning Committee co-chairs.

For more information on this strategic plan and community members who participated in its development, please visit LiveUnitedRI.org/AboutUs.



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