

PRESS RELEASE

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11 Leaders Selected for Design Team Tasked with Helping to Create a Nonprofit Resource Center in Rhode Island

In helping to strengthen the state's sector, members will lend their expertise over seven months

Providence, R.I. (April 19, 2022) — Work to create a Nonprofit Resource Center to support Rhode Island organizations is picking up steam with the selection of the members of the Design Team that will be tasked with cocreating a vision and plan for what the effort will look like. United Way of Rhode Island, which is convening the nonprofit community in establishing a center aimed at strengthening the sector, has named 11 nonprofit leaders to the team. They are:

Tarshire Battle, [Roots 2Empower](#)
Rikki Davis, [RIOT Rhode Island](#)
Angelo Garcia, [Segue Institute for Learning](#)
Roberto Gonzalez, [STEAM Box](#)
Anthony Hubbard, [YouthBuild](#)
Rakia Islam, [Refugee Dream Center](#)

Niko Merritt, [Sankofa Community Connection](#)
James Monteiro, [Reentry Campus Program](#)
Tina Pedersen, [RAMP](#)
Jo-Ann Schofield, [Mentor Rhode Island](#)
Kristen Williams, [Riverzedge Arts](#)

The team features representation from nonprofits of varying size, with the selection committee ensuring a racial and ethnically diverse makeup reflective of the communities the sector serves.

“There is a tremendous amount of knowledge, passion, and experience throughout our nonprofit community and their input is essential to influencing what this resource will ultimately look like and how it will function,” said Cortney Nicolato, president and CEO of United Way. “We had a strong application response, and this group of individuals particularly stood out for their collection of unique insights and commitment to collaboration — I’m very excited for what comes next.”

Design Team members are playing a vital role in cocreating the vision. They have begun meeting and will continue to meet biweekly for the next seven months. Members will engage with stakeholders throughout the state and respond to research to inform how the center will be structured, staffed, and funded. The team will then shape a recommendation to United Way.

“We have an opportunity to help reimagine our state’s nonprofit landscape through establishing this much-needed resource, and I see the priorities of building greater equity in funding and deeper statewide investments in human services infrastructure as being paramount,” said Rakia Islam, deputy director of Refugee Dream Center. “Having been exposed to the many social barriers that could use systemic intervention, I’m eager to contribute to the work of this team.”

Once established, a Nonprofit Resource Center will be able to serve the Ocean State’s entire nonprofit ecosystem, especially those led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and smaller organizations that are often undersupported, yet essential to our communities. To this end, the Design Team will work to create a vision that responds to needs nonprofit leaders throughout the state have identified.

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These needs include equitable access to funding; assistance with racial equity work, leadership development, and other capacity-building resources; advocacy support; and opportunities for connection, shared learning, and collaboration among nonprofits.

“I am thankful to join the team and to bring my perspective on and commitment to justice,” added Roberto Gonzalez, executive director of STEAM Box. “Instead of nonprofits scrambling for crumbs, we can unite with shared resources and new systems designed to empower our work and, in turn, the marginalized communities we serve — it’s time to create a new model.”

More than 60 individuals applied to be considered for the Design Team. Those who were not selected will be invited to be involved in other capacities currently being organized, such as advisory clusters, focus groups, and input partners.

The first public input session is Tuesday, May 24 from 8:30 - 10 a.m. Rhode Islanders interested in hearing about the Design Team's initial research, as well as sharing their insights and ideas, are invited to [register for this virtual input session](#).

Creating a statewide Nonprofit Resource Center is a key component of the “Invest United” pillar of United Way’s [LIVE UNITED 2025](#) plan. To support the development of this effort, United Way has received a \$1 million commitment from the Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC), and funding from Rhode Island Commerce as part of their Network Matching Grant program.

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United Way of Rhode Island is uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. A member of the world’s largest nonprofit network, we bring together individuals, businesses, nonprofits, community leaders, and government to tackle the root causes of inequity and achieve specific, measurable goals. Our programs include 211, the statewide front door connecting Rhode Islanders with social services, resources, and vital programs. Both directly and through grants to nonprofits, we are investing to build economic opportunity, advance childhood learning, expand philanthropy, and drive policy and participation. To learn more, visit unitedwayri.org, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Twitter](#).