

## 2022 NONPROFIT INNOVATION LAB



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Leaders of 10 Local Organizations Chosen for New Nonprofit Innovation Lab

*Participants will spend the coming months developing unique solutions to social issues for the chance to secure funding to bring their ideas to life*

**Providence, R.I.** (June 21, 2022) — The leaders of 10 local organizations have been selected as fellows to participate in the latest Nonprofit Innovation Lab. This marks the third cohort of the joint effort of [United Way of Rhode Island](#) and [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) (SEG) that launched in 2020. The unique program challenges organizations to think outside the box to develop new solutions to pressing social issues, and offers an opportunity to secure seed funding to bring those ideas to life.

With the Nonprofit Innovation Lab, United Way and SEG help to accelerate organizations' ability to hone and implement unique ideas with the potential to create positive social impact. The effort pairs each fellow with a custom team of coaches and provides the knowledge, resources, and networking opportunities that help turn transformative ideas into reality. The months-long program culminates with "Sparked!", a "Shark Tank"-like presentation broadcast on Rhode Island PBS where fellows compete for \$90,000 in seed funding and other in-kind services and supports. The fellows selected and their organizations are:

- Christopher Antao, [Gnome Surf](#)
- Elizabeth Cunha, [The Center for Dynamic Learning](#)
- Eugenio Fernandez, Melior
- Bior Guigni, [Beat the Streets New England](#)
- Jody Jencks, [Meeting Street](#)
- Helene Miller, [The Partnership for Providence Parks, Recreation Centers, and Streetscapes \(P3\)](#)
- James Monteiro, [Reentry Campus Program](#)
- Nicole O'Malley, [Hands in Harmony](#)
- Valerie Tutson, [Rhode Island Black Storytellers](#)
- Kristen Williams, [Riverzedge Arts](#)

"Day in and day out, Rhode Island nonprofits are responsible for providing some of the most important services in our state, and it is vital that we support and nurture their ability to continue the work that so many of our neighbors need and rely on," said Cortney Nicolato, United Way's president and CEO. "And that's exactly why we're excited to again partner with SEG to offer the Nonprofit Innovation Lab."

Among the projects selected for advancement are Meeting Street's vision to create a Teacher's Assistant Apprenticeship Program to address both an ongoing labor shortage and the longstanding underrepresentation of minorities in the field; Hands in Harmony developing a specialized Mental Health and Music Wellness program to decrease stress and improve healthcare utilization; and Riverzedge Arts expanding its art and entrepreneurial programming to serve adults while simultaneously growing its career development and employment offerings for at-risk youth.

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“This program provides our state’s nonprofit leaders with the space, practical tools, networks, and supports to step back from the day-to-day and dream big to bring innovative practices to their communities,” said Kelly Ramirez, CEO of Social Enterprise Greenhouse. “This group has an exciting amount of talent and a broad range of expertise from youth development and the arts to healthcare, and we’re looking forward to seeing their ideas grow and benefit our state.”

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**About Social Enterprise Greenhouse**

Social Enterprise Greenhouse creates positive social and economic impact by providing social entrepreneurs and enterprises with the tools and networks they need to thrive. It fosters an ecosystem of diverse stakeholders who work to enable a more just, equitable, and resilient economy. SEG operates statewide in Rhode Island from programming sites in Providence, Newport, and Pawtucket/Central Falls. Its network of 600+ social enterprises and 250+ business and community leaders contributes time, expertise, and funding to grow Rhode Island’s social impact ecosystem. To learn more, visit [segreenhouse.org](http://segreenhouse.org).

**About United Way of Rhode Island**

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](http://unitedwayri.org), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).