

PRESS RELEASE

50 Valley Street, Providence, RI 02909-2459
(401) 444.0600 | fax (401) 444.0635
www.LIVEUNITEDri.org



Contact: Michael J. Cerio | michael@ceriocommunications.com | (401) 743-8269

IDREES LANRE AJAKAIYE JOINS UNITED WAY OF RHODE ISLAND AS CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

As a key member of the executive leadership team, Ajakaiye will lead the organization's resource efforts to build racial equity and create opportunities for all Rhode Islanders

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND (Oct. 11, 2022) — Following a broad, competitive search for its chief development officer, United Way of Rhode Island has hired a community leader known to be an innovative changemaker. The organization has chosen Idrees “Lanre” Ajakaiye, who brings a deep and diverse range of experience to United Way’s work to transform the future by building racial equity and creating opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. He begins his new role on Oct. 11.

“Lanre is a native Rhode Islander who has been at the center of achieving some of our state’s most recent, high-level initiatives toward building racial equity. He’s about action and getting things done,” said Cortney Nicolato, United Way’s president and CEO. “As we embark on our 100th year and realizing the LIVE UNITED 2025 goals of dismantling systemic and institutional barriers in our state, Lanre is just the right person to lead our development growth into the future.”

The executive leadership position of chief development officer plays a vital role in achieving the ambitious goals put forth by United Way in its current strategic plan, LIVE UNITED 2025. The plan outlines United Way’s commitment to achieving racial equity and creating social justice in the Ocean State, with the organization committing to invest \$100 million over five years (2021 – 2025) in support of this mission.

“This role of chief development officer is rooted in having a passion and vision for breaking down the generations-old barriers holding back our state. This work is at the core of who I am and what I believe,” said Ajakaiye. “I’ve been doing this for more than 30 years and am beyond excited to collaborate, grow, and expand United Way’s work and impact in a state that I love. It’s an honor to join a team that is so focused on seeing Rhode Island thrive, and I can’t wait to get started.”

Lanre has a proven track record of strategic leadership and driving growth, drawing upon his experience across the Fortune 50, nonprofit, and startup sectors with a particular focus on customer relationship management, technology, membership, marketing, and institutional and direct sales. He is well-known as a driving force behind the [25 Bough Street](#) community initiative in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. His vision, and that of others, is to transform the vacant, blighted property into an in-demand public space used to empower the community through workforce and career development, education and mentorship, innovation, entrepreneurship, the celebration of life, and more. The effort boasts a robust operations and property management plan which will tend to its day-to-day.

Among his community involvements, Lanre serves on the boards of Hope & Main, and the Rhode Island Youth Basketball Association, where he founded the City of Providence’s travel team.

He lives in Providence with his family and is a proud graduate of Classical High School. Lanre earned a master’s in business from Boston University and graduated from the University of Rhode Island Talent Development Program with academic excellence. In 2022, he was inducted into the

City of Providence's Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hall of Fame and is also a Leadership Rhode Island alumnus.

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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](#).