

PRESS RELEASE

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United Way of Rhode Island

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United Way Investing \$10 Million in Community Programs Grants support organizations whose work advances the mission to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders

Providence, Rhode Island (May 23, 2023) — With a focus on achieving the goals of its [LIVE UNITED 2025](#) plan to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders, United Way of Rhode Island is investing \$10 million in the work of community organizations over three years. These latest grants have been awarded from United Way’s Community Impact Fund and received by a total of 45 local nonprofits, following what were intentional changes to the organization’s grantmaking program.

In 2021, United Way made the commitment to invest \$100 million over five years to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. With this round of funding, the organization’s contributions through programs, grants, and philanthropy now total more than \$71.25 million toward that goal in just three years. Additionally in 2023, United Way will offer more opportunities for funding with a focus on summer learning, opportunity grants, equity initiatives, and family stabilization, among others.

“Taking on Rhode Island’s biggest challenges, like building racial equity, requires big investments in the most innovative nonprofit organizations in our state,” said Cortney Nicolato, United Way’s president and CEO. “With the support of our donors, sponsors, and corporate champions, we are driving changes in our state that benefit every Rhode Islander. Our grantees are our partners in this work and in our mission to realize a thriving Rhode Island, and we are proud to work together for a better state.”

United Way’s overhaul of its grant program was driven by the purpose to better serve organizations whose work is rooted in actively advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Among the changes are three years of funding rather than two, awarding only unrestricted grants, instituting nontraditional reporting, and addressing the funding inequities faced by nonprofits led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) leaders. On average, these organizations have less than half of the staff and budget as non-BIPOC-led nonprofits.

Aligning with United Way’s strategic priorities, the focus areas of the awarded grants include out-of-school time and experiential learning opportunities for students in underserved communities, housing, job training and economic empowerment, and community-based advocacy to advance social justice and racial equity.

“The process for these funding decisions took the old model of grantmaking and turned it upside down, and I truly believe that can be transformational for nonprofits in our state,” said Larry Warner, DrPH, MPH, chief impact and equity officer for United Way. “We know our community has needs and that unrestricted support allows organizations to do the important work that meets those needs. This is what trust-based philanthropy looks like.”

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Among the grantee organizations, two — Inspiring Minds and Mt. Hope Learning Center — were funded at the recommendation of United Way's Women United group. Women United works actively to further childhood literacy and ensure Rhode Island children have equitable opportunities to learn and read through its grantmaking and volunteerism.

Organizations were invited to apply for up to \$75,000 in annual funding for the three-year period of 2023 to 2026. Proposals went through a multiphase review process, in which a committee of 29 took a holistic approach to reviewing each application. Proposals were scored on alignment with United Way's mission; organizational readiness to invest; population served and geographical reach; justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion plans; and proposed activities. There were 238 grant applications received, totaling \$17.8 million in funding requests.

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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](#).