



PRESS RELEASE



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United Way Announces Nancy Wolanski as Inaugural Director of Rhode Island's New — and First — Nonprofit Resource Center Team of local stakeholders engaged candidates from around the country during inclusive, monthslong process

Providence, Rhode Island (July 31, 2023) — United Way of Rhode Island has hired Nancy Wolanski as the inaugural director of the state's new Nonprofit Resource Center. She assumed the role on Monday, July 31. Most recently, Nancy was executive director of the Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island.

The hiring of Wolanski culminates several years of work and research to create a singular center to serve Rhode Island's entire nonprofit sector, with a particular focus on BIPOC-led organizations and smaller nonprofits that are often under-supported, yet essential to our communities. A first-of-its-kind entity in Rhode Island, the Nonprofit Resource Center is being incubated within United Way. For the search and selection of the center's first director, United Way sought significant input from nonprofit leaders and stakeholders throughout the Ocean State.

"The needs of our state's nonprofit sector, as well as the impact of its mission-driven work on quality of life in Rhode Island, are well documented, and perhaps no one understands these better than Nancy Wolanski," said Cortney Nicolato, president and CEO of United Way. "This is in Nancy's DNA and when you combine that passion with her experience and amazing ability to listen and engage with the community, you have a formula to empower our nonprofits like never before, making Rhode Island stronger in the process."

As director of the center, Nancy has overall strategic and operational responsibility for its development and growth, in collaboration with United Way leadership, and in alignment with the mission and values developed in partnership with local nonprofit leaders during the design process. The position reports directly to United Way's Nicolato.

Nancy will focus on initiatives that address both emerging and systemic needs of the sector while ensuring the center's programs and services are accessible, responsive, and increase capacity and resilience of Rhode Island nonprofits. The center aims not to duplicate local efforts available to nonprofits; instead, it will serve as an information and collaboration hub, elevate the impact of the sector, support nonprofit staff, and partner with the public sector and funders to develop resources, address funding inequities, and strengthen workforce pipelines. An advisory board for the center will be created, and United Way will continue to engage the community as the center evolves.

"I have spent my entire career in the nonprofit sector, and with each passing day I become more convinced that nonprofit organizations are the foundation on which our community, economy, and government are built," said Nancy Wolanski. "Without a sustainable nonprofit sector, it is impossible to realize a thriving, equitable Rhode Island."

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“And without the collaboration and intentional investment of government, business, foundations, and individual donors, our state’s nonprofits cannot continue to provide the essential services so many of our families rely upon. I am beyond excited for this opportunity and for what the center will mean to our state.”

Nancy spent eight years as executive director of the Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island (GCRI), leading the statewide funders network and incorporating racial equity and trust-based philanthropy concepts and training, and implementing professional development opportunities. She led the development and execution of Rhode Island’s first comprehensive, statewide “State of the Nonprofit Sector” survey, and has been an unwavering public voice for the importance of philanthropy. Nancy is a steadfast advocate for the nonprofit sector at the State House, having recently testified in support of increased wages for human services organizations.

Prior to GCRI, Nancy held various positions with the Feinstein Community Service Center at Johnson & Wales University, including as assistant director. She is also adjunct faculty in the University’s Social Sciences Department. Earlier in her career, Nancy spent time working with the American Mathematical Society and Thames Science Center.

An integral component to both shaping the vision for the Nonprofit Resource Center and the search for its first director has been the contributions of a diverse Design Team, comprised of 11 local nonprofit leaders. For more than a year, the team met biweekly to explore all aspects of the center, facilitate stakeholder engagement, and create a business model. Nancy was among those to help provide strategic leadership to the Design Team, helping members to consult with more than 400 community leaders, funders, and capacity building experts.

“From the beginning of this process, the entire Design Team appreciated Nancy’s position in ensuring our work was intentional and would meet the needs of our entire nonprofit community,” said Angelo Garcia, M. ED., founder and executive director of Segue Institute for Learning, and a member of the center’s Design Team. “In her we found a supporter who validated our concerns as representatives of the sector. Working with someone closely for a year you learn what they are made of, and Nancy is going to bring not only years of experience, but immeasurable compassion to this initiative.”

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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. As 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](#), [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), or [YouTube](#).