



PRESS RELEASE



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United Way Accepting Applications for Providence Equity Fund Grant Program

In collaboration with the City of Providence, up to \$1.5 million to be awarded over two years to nonprofits addressing equity gaps in the community; deadline to apply is May 6

Providence, Rhode Island (April 12, 2024) In collaboration with the City of Providence and aligned with its mission to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders, United Way of Rhode Island has issued a request for proposal (RFP) for the Providence Equity Fund grant program. Available funding is to support strategies that promote racial and social equity, economic mobility, and educational opportunities for underserved populations in Providence.

Nonprofits working in these issue areas may apply for unrestricted general operating grants of up to \$50,000 per year for two years. [The application is accessible online](#), and the application deadline is May 6. This funding opportunity follows the work and [recommendations of the Providence Municipal Reparations Commission](#).

“This is a very important first step among many that we’ll take over the next few years,” said Larry Warner, DrPH, United Way’s chief impact and equity officer. “The history of racial discrimination in Providence and how it has adversely impacted the lives of Indigenous and African heritage people is irrefutable. These grants, along with our work to establish a policy and research center in the pursuit of equitable policies, are vital pieces to creating the transformational change we need.”

Funding is intended to address the needs of Providence residents in the demographic groups of Indigenous and tribal peoples, African heritage, Qualified Census Tracts and neighborhoods, and residents facing poverty. The following three focus areas are prioritized:

- Closing the racial wealth gap: projects and programs may include, but are not limited to, skill development and job training, minority-owned business initiatives, homeownership and affordable housing, economic empowerment and financial literacy programs.
- Addressing the negative impacts of urban renewal due to displacement and gentrification: strategies may include entrepreneurial resilience and small business supports in targeted census tracts, tenant support services, and community development and revitalization initiatives.
- Enhancing access to culturally competent resources in education and out-of-school time learning for K-12 BIPOC youth: initiatives may include mentorship, programs that incorporate artistic expression with cultural identity, community gardens and urban farming.

In developing the RFP, United Way sought significant input from the community, hosting focus groups in February and community engagement labs in March. Feedback from these sessions helped to inform eligibility criteria, areas of need, maximizing the impact of the funding, the meaning of equity across different populations, and streamlining the application process.

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“The grants provided through the Providence Equity Fund will make meaningful progress toward closing local racial and social equity gaps,” said Mayor Brett P. Smiley. “Improving the lives of Providence’s residents who face disparities in income, education, housing, and health outcomes requires targeted investments in critical services throughout the city. I look forward to working with our partners at United Way of Rhode Island to ensure these programs have a positive impact within our community.”

Added Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris (Ward 11), “I’d like to thank my Council colleagues for their efforts in making the Providence Equity Fund grant program a reality. Promoting racial and social equity is about fairness. It’s creating a community where everyone has equal opportunities to survive and thrive. I encourage nonprofits serving Providence residents to apply for this funding, which can make such an impact across our neighborhoods. It’s important to recognize our underserved residents and build a network that slams the door on the racial wealth gap.”

United Way will host two information sessions, along with making a [recording of the session available on demand](#). The first session will be held on April 16 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at United Way’s office at 50 Valley Street in Providence. The second session will be on April 19 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Rhode Island Black Business Association, 220 Smith Street in Providence.

Additionally, United Way will offer a series of virtual office hours via Zoom between April 17 and April 30. During these sessions, staff will be available to answer questions regarding application content, the application platform, and the application process.

For both the information sessions and virtual office hours, attendees are asked to [register in advance online](#).

Funding decisions will be made in June 2024.

Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to pvdequityfund@unitedwayri.org.

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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](#).