



PRESS RELEASE



50 Valley Street, Providence, RI 02909-2459 | (401) 444-0600 | fax (401) 444-0635 | www.unitedwayri.org

Contacts: United Way: Michael J. Cerio | michael@ceriocommunications.com

City of Providence: Josh Estrella | jestrella@providenceri.gov

United Way and City of Providence Announce \$1.5 Million in Providence Equity Fund Grants

Funding supports strategies that promote racial and social equity, economic mobility, and educational opportunities for underserved populations in Providence

Providence, Rhode Island (Aug. 14, 2024) — During a press conference on Wednesday, Aug. 14, United Way of Rhode Island and the City of Providence announced the recipient organizations of \$1.5 million in funding from the Providence Equity Fund. In total, 15 organizations have been awarded grants to support strategies that promote racial and social equity, economic mobility, and educational opportunities for underserved populations in Providence.

The funding is a combination of monies from an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation by former Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza and enacted by current Mayor Brett P. Smiley, and United Way donor support, and follows the work and [recommendations of the Providence Municipal Reparations Commission](#). Use of ARPA funds for the Providence Equity Fund at United Way of Rhode Island was voted on and approved by the Providence City Council.

“This is a pivotal, milestone moment for our state to address the systemic racial inequities and injustices that have perpetuated for generations, and which continue to hold back our BIPOC communities,” said Cortney Nicolato, United Way’s president and CEO. “Everything about this fund and these grants align with the goals of our Live United 2025 strategic plan and our commitment to advancing equity and inclusion in Rhode Island.”

The Providence Equity Fund at United Way of Rhode Island grant program was made available to all nonprofits that serve the City of Providence. Awarded grants are 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 list of those to receive funding is as follows:

- Building Futures.
- Center for Indigenous Peoples Rights.
- Center for Women & Enterprise.
- College Unbound.
- Direct Action for Rights and Equality.
- Justice Assistance.
- Manton Avenue Project.
- Mini Entrepreneurs of Rhode Island.
- Olneyville Neighborhood Association.
- Providence Promise.
- Providence Revolving Fund.
- Rhode Island Black Business Association.
- Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

- Sojourner House.
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.

“The targeted investments from the Providence Equity Fund will have a tangible impact on the lives of Providence’s residents who we know have been historically marginalized,” said Mayor Brett P. Smiley. “I’m proud to support the incredible work of these nonprofit organizations who are making meaningful progress towards closing local racial and social equity gaps and building a more equitable and inclusive Providence. I’m thankful to our partners at United Way of Rhode Island for their continued commitment to supporting and advancing programs that have a lasting impact on our community.”

Funding priority was placed on organizations whose programs focused on closing the racial wealth gap, addressing the negative impacts of urban renewal due to displacement and gentrification, and enhancing access to culturally competent resources in education and out-of-school time learning for K-12 BIPOC youth. Nonprofits working in these issue areas have been awarded unrestricted general operating grants of up to \$50,000 per year for two years.

“I’m grateful to United Way and the Providence Municipal Reparations Commission for their work on these grants,” said Providence Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris (Ward 11). “I applaud the 15 organizations and look forward to seeing their continued work to make Providence a more fair place to live.”

United Way released the request for proposals for the Providence Equity Fund grant program in May following significant input from the community. The organization hosted focus groups and community engagement labs, from which feedback 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.

###

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 United Way 211 in Rhode Island, 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](#).