



# Investing in Rhode Island: Grantmaking and Beyond

The Rhode Island Foundation

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## Your Community Foundation

The Rhode Island Foundation is a proactive community and philanthropic leader dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Rhode Island. The Foundation prides itself on serving the state of Rhode Island as its only community foundation. Of the more than 700 community foundations across the United States, we are among the oldest, established in 1916 by founder Jesse Metcalf with a gift of \$10,000, and one of the largest, with assets exceeding \$520 million at the end of 2009. In the past decade, the Foundation has invested more than \$240 million in Rhode Island.

For nearly 100 years, The Rhode Island Foundation has been a proud investor in Rhode Island – and in the nonprofit organizations working diligently to improve the lives of Rhode Islanders. Whether they explore new approaches to public education, expand access to affordable health care, provide economic opportunities, advocate for social justice and change, preserve our quality of place, or bring the arts to new audiences, Rhode Island’s nonprofit organizations enrich our communities beyond measure. Through our grantmaking programs, we honor their commitment to Rhode Island’s future.

The Foundation also works with nonprofits in many ways beyond grants. In these pages, you will learn about our major grants programs, a few signature funding opportunities, and some of the other types of assistance we provide. We hope you will contact us to learn more.

## Our Priorities

The Foundation invests the dollars we direct – approximately 40% of available grant funds – in the following sectors:

- Arts and culture
- Economic and community development
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Human services

In 2010, we announced an added emphasis on two areas within these sectors that we believe are critical to our state’s economic well-being: public education and primary health care.

In addition, the Foundation offers grants that benefit particular issues or geographic regions, as determined by donors’ charitable interests, through field of interest funds.

Each grant program has different purposes, application requirements, and deadlines, so please review the guidelines specific to each grant opportunity at [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org).

# Grant Opportunities

## Small Grants

The small grants program strengthens organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The Foundation views our small grants as small investments that can make big differences within organizations and the community.

The program consists of two distinct grant opportunities:

- **Basic human needs grants** help community-based programs provide emergency assistance to Rhode Islanders in need. Grants of up to \$5,000 are awarded to programs that provide food, clothing, housing, prescription, and utility assistance. We also provide larger grants to “wholesale” providers of emergency food, utility assistance, and housing.
- **Organizational development grants**, up to \$10,000, help strengthen community organizations, particularly in their planning efforts. The funds can be used for a variety of activities that strengthen and improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including strategic planning, board development, marketing, reorganization, financial management systems, or succession planning. An organizational assessment – to be completed by both the executive director and board chair – is part of the application process for organizational development grants.

*Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and reviewed monthly.*

## Fund for a Healthy Rhode Island

As one aspect of our focus on primary health care, The Fund for a Healthy Rhode Island directs resources toward building a model primary care system in two ways:

### GRANTS

Grants for innovations in direct primary care services, access to affordable medications, and public awareness programs. Seventy-five percent of the available grant dollars each year will be allocated in three areas:

- The development of new approaches and partnerships to make primary care services more accessible when and where working families can use them (i.e., evenings, weekends, satellite locations)
- The development of new approaches to creating access to affordable medications
- The development of education and outreach approaches that engage all Rhode Islanders.

*The next grant application cycle for the Fund for a Healthy Rhode Island will be in late 2011.*

### A PRIMARY CARE LOAN FORGIVENESS POOL

Working in primary care requires long, unpredictable hours and offers lower pay than other medical specialties. The Foundation therefore has developed a loan forgiveness program for doctors and other medical professionals – nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, mental health workers, case workers, and others. For information on the program or to apply, please see [www.risla.com](http://www.risla.com), the website of the Rhode Island Student Loan Authority.



## How does the Foundation invest in Rhode Island?

- Through annual grants, both at the Foundation’s discretion and donor-directed, to nonprofit organizations serving the community...more than \$240 million in the past decade
- Through scholarships of nearly \$1 million every year, helping Rhode Islanders
- Through leadership and advocacy in addressing the challenges in education, health, arts and culture, community and economic development, environment, human services, and more

# Grant Opportunities

## Strategy Grants

Our signature grant program, strategy grants fund projects that address significant community challenges, strive for lasting impact, and serve disadvantaged Rhode Islanders.

### Areas of Focus

#### ARTS AND CULTURE

**KEY GOAL:** Ensure the vitality of the arts sector and increase participation in the arts.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Efforts that foster artistic and operational collaboration within the sector and result in efficiencies
- Efforts to deepen, expand, and diversify audiences for artistic and cultural presentations
- Programs that support art making with youth in public schools and community settings



#### COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**KEY GOAL:** Increase affordable housing options in the state and increase the number of Rhode Islanders ready to enter the workforce.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing, providing ample rental and homeownership units
- Efforts focused on job training and readiness that address the workforce needs of employers and employees

#### EDUCATION

**KEY GOAL:** Reduce the number of students dropping out of school and increase the number of high school graduates who will go on to post-secondary education or job training programs.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Efforts focused on middle school and high school retention – programs and supports that motivate kids to learn, to reach graduation, and to seek further education opportunities
- Investments in charter schools and specialty schools where best practices can be learned and shared with larger schools and districts
- Programs addressing professional development and peer support for educational leaders

### The concept behind strategy grants

The Foundation believes that real progress requires a mix of approaches: innovative and sustainable ideas, strong nonprofit organizations and leaders, and organizing and advocacy. Within our six sectors, strategy grants support a mix of these three strategies:

#### Innovative models and proven programs

Funding innovative efforts to improve social outcomes, we support best practices, projects based on unique research or experience in a field, and projects that push the boundaries. We also seek to expand and sustain programs that are highly effective and produce change for the better.

#### Organizational and leadership development

The Foundation is deeply committed to increasing nonprofit capacity. Strategy grants help organizations change how they train staff, move to new business models, and reach out to new audiences. We review requests through this lens: does the project make your organization stronger?

#### Policy, advocacy, and systems reform

The Foundation believes that informed decisions require good information, that systems are best improved by listening to the people who have to live with them, and that people should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Under this strategy, the Foundation funds:

- Projects that involve research and analysis on pressing issues (to shed light on why problems exist and to recommend good policy)
- Advocacy and organizing that gives voice to underrepresented groups and views
- Efforts that improve failing systems and programs by focusing on institutional change

## ENVIRONMENT

**KEY GOAL:** Maximize the conservation, restoration and stewardship of Rhode Island's natural resources and support local opportunities to address climate change.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Efforts that advance environmental stewardship and strengthen the sector's capacity to protect and restore Rhode Island's natural resources through policy advocacy and programming
- Efforts to promote energy conservation, renewable energy, local agriculture, and efficient public transit



## HEALTH

**KEY GOAL:** Promote the development of a successful and effective system of primary care and increase the access, affordability, and quality of primary care for Rhode Island citizens.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Efforts that integrate oral health and mental health with primary care
- Programs that improve primary care management of chronic conditions
- Efforts to positively change the way the system pays for primary care



## HUMAN SERVICES

**KEY GOAL:** Strengthen the continuum of care for at-risk children, youth in crisis, and teen parents.

**PRINCIPAL TARGET AREAS:**

- Programs that utilize evidence-based practices tailored to meet the needs of target populations as outlined above
- Efforts to develop systems, policies and advocacy to improve the overall well-being of and outcomes for children

We are working to increase the average amount of strategy grant awards, especially for proposals involving statewide collaboration, including partnerships with other funders or donors.

We provide general support grants for organizations whose work aligns with the focus areas for each sector, have excellent leadership, and are fiscally sound. We do not commit to multi-year grants, although it is not at all unusual for us to support projects of several years' duration with a series of grants.

You must discuss your strategy grant proposal with a grant programs officer prior to applying. Applications are accepted throughout the year, and funding decisions generally are made within six to ten weeks of an application being received. Visit [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org) to learn more about the application process.

## What is a community foundation?

The Council on Foundations, the nation's professional association of foundations, has outlined six characteristics of community foundations:

- Flexible, yet permanent collection of funds supported by a wide range of donors
- Relative independence to determine the best use of those funds to meet community needs
- Governing board of volunteers, knowledgeable about the community and recognized for their involvement in civic affairs
- Commitment to provide leadership on pervasive community problems
- Commitment to assist donors to identify and attain their philanthropic goals
- Adherence to a sense of "community" that overrides individual interests and concerns

# Grant Opportunities

## Newport County Fund

The Newport County Fund (NCF) was established as a permanent endowment of the Foundation in 2002 to benefit the communities of Newport County: Jamestown, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, and Tiverton. NCF's small grants program – grants of \$1,000 to \$10,000 – supports projects that benefit those communities. Key funding areas mirror those of the Foundation: arts and culture, community and economic development, education, environment, health, and human services.

In awarding these grants, NCF seeks opportunities where a relatively small amount of money can be of strategic assistance. Opportunities include project development support for new programs; strengthening and/or expanding established community programs and services; community or municipal planning and/or leadership; and policy or advocacy efforts on behalf of community concerns.

Our larger grants program (grants of \$20,000 to \$50,000) supports projects focused on a specific area of need within Newport County. From 2005 through 2009, the Fund invested in building a system of out-of-school time programs for youth in Newport County.

In 2010, NCF will launch the Common Ground Grants program, a new initiative to support creative collaborative projects that cross institutional boundaries and the borders of Newport County's six cities and towns. This competitive grant program is open to proposals in all six sectors and multi-sector approaches are strongly encouraged.

## Equity Action

Equity Action is committed to enacting social change by championing initiatives and organizations that encourage justice for, provide support to, and improve the quality of life of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Rhode Islanders.

Equity Action offers two types of grants:

- Small grants up to \$2,500 are available on a rolling basis to support short-term projects or one-time activities.
- Project and capacity-building grants, from \$2,500 to \$10,000, are awarded annually to support projects that meet the community's priority needs as presented in *Meet the Neighbors*, the Foundation's LGBTQ community scan. *Applications are due April 15 of each year.*

Successful proposals will strengthen leadership and enhance program services in meeting the needs of LGBTQ people.

## Program for Animal Welfare

Seven special funds at the Foundation relate to the humane treatment and protection of animals. The Program for Animal Welfare (PAW) supports animal humane education, treatment, and work on animal welfare issues by funding animal welfare programs and initiatives statewide and in individual communities. Grants focus on the welfare of companion animals and specific populations of wild animals.

Please see our website for additional grant opportunities.



## How the Foundation evaluates grant requests

The Foundation may use any of the following criteria when reviewing your grant proposal, particularly strategy grants. For more detail about any of these criteria, visit [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org).

- Organizational stability and capacity
- Leadership
- Sustainability
- Impact and evaluation
- Collaboration
- Community relevance and clarity
- Diversity
- Equity



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is my organization eligible for a Foundation grant?

The Foundation provides grants to nonprofit organizations serving Rhode Island. Groups that have not yet applied for or received a determination of their nonprofit status may work through a fiscal agent.

### In what other ways does the Foundation provide assistance?

- In each of our key sectors, a Foundation staff member is responsible for understanding the strategies and needs of those working in the field and generating ideas about how to move the issue forward.
- We bring together grantees, concerned Rhode Islanders, community leaders, and public officials to collaborate around topics of mutual interest.
- We introduce nonprofits to other funding sources and to other organizations that might be doing similar work.
- In certain fields, we provide technical assistance to practitioners.
- The Foundation holds and administers the endowments of more than 140 nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island. For more information about organizational endowments, contact us at 401 274-4564.

### How are grant applications evaluated?

The Foundation uses several criteria to evaluate discretionary grant proposals. See the sidebar on page 6 for more information.

### Do you provide support for capital projects?

The Foundation does not provide support for capital campaigns except for grants made through the Program for Animal Welfare.

### Do you provide grants to individuals?

Except in cases of the Foundation Fellows Program, the MacColl Johnson Fellowship, or our scholarship opportunities, we do not fund individuals.

### How do you measure the success of funded projects?

In all of our grantmaking, we have committed to an increased focus on the impact of our investments. Foundation staff members work with each grantee to understand the impact of the work the Foundation has supported. This information is compiled and presented by the Foundation in an annual impact report, describing the outcomes and community changes our grantee partners have achieved.

#### STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR:

### Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence

In 2008, the Foundation launched our Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence (INE), designed to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations through targeted programs and activities, so that they can better achieve their important missions in the community.

Through the INE, the Foundation provides tools and information to promote good governance, sound management, cross-sector collaboration, and reliable research. INE offers a board development program, organizational development workshops, and a program for nonprofit emerging leaders, as well as a yearlong leadership development program for executive directors (the Foundation Fellows).

For more information, visit the “Community Initiatives” section of [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org).

### Learn More

For more information about these and other grant opportunities the Foundation offers, visit [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org) or contact us at 401 274-4564.

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:

Providence Community Health Centers, credit: PCHC  
International Institute Rhode Island, credit: Lucas Foglia  
Sakonnet Preservation Association, credit: Abigail Brooks

ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED IN PHOTOGRAPHS THROUGHOUT:

Children's Friend (PAGE 3); Providence CityArts for Youth (pages 4 and 5);  
Sakonnet Preservation Association (PAGE 5); International Yacht Restoration School (PAGE 6);  
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (PAGE 7)

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