

Papitto Opportunity Connection

February 2025

POC Responds To Non-Profit Crisis

Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) will continue its traditional grant making process rather than implement previously announced changes scheduled to take effect this year.

The decision comes as critical federal systems supporting the non-profit community remain in flux, potentially impacting the long-term viability of many organizations that work with communities most in need.

“In response to the uncertainty coming from Washington, coupled with the massive state budget deficit Rhode Island is currently experiencing, POC’s Board of Trustees has decided to indefinitely continue the small grant program that has been a fundamental piece of our work since we were founded in 2020,” said POC Managing Trustee John Tarantino. “While we remain committed to the idea that larger grants are more likely to create systemic change, we also realize that in these uncertain times a small grant to an organization that is doing good work can be equally important to ensuring those who need help the most receive it.”

By the end of 2025, POC’s small grant program was to sunset, replaced by POC’s Million Dollar Innovation Challenge Grant Program. Now, both programs will remain in place. This year POC will make approximately \$6 million in unsolicited grants to Rhode Island non-profits under both programs. POC also continues to fund millions of dollars in multi-year grants that were previously awarded.

The POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge supports programming that is designed to create systemic change for communities most in need in the areas of education, job skills training, entrepreneurship, healthcare, or housing.

Nonprofits are encouraged to collaborate on proposals to leverage resources and cultivate partnerships. POC’s Small Grant Program provides operational funding to organizations with demonstrated needs of varying sizes.



Applications for both grants, which will be awarded through a competitive RFP process, will be accepted June 1-15 and December 1-15 via our online application portal. All organizations applying for a grant must submit an online application to be considered— this applies to first time grants, and those organizations seeking additional funding. No more than one grant for each organization will be considered in a year.

In these uncertain times, our founding principles remain the same:
Here to listen. Here to help.

Update On December 2024 Grant Cycle

POC's Board of Trustees and Board of Advisors have completed their review of the more than 140 grant applications received for the Million Dollar Innovation Grant and Small Grant Programs from the December grant cycle.

POC anticipates making awards by early March. Again, as in the past, organizations will be notified by email of their award and there will be a two-week window for recipients to collect their funding.

To learn more about both grant programs, click [here](#).

We Celebrate Black History Month

Mixed Magic Theater

For nearly 25 years, [Mixed Magic Theater](#) has been dedicated to building more literate, art-active communities. This month the Pawtucket-based nonprofit is showcasing Black History Month and hosting special events and performances throughout February.

PLEASE JOIN MIXED MAGIC THEATRE FOR

**FREEDOM AND THE ARTS:
A CONVERSATION WITH**

MODERATED BY JONATHAN PITTS-WILEY

SENATOR JACK REED **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST, 7:30 PM** CONGRESSMAN GABE AMO

Photo courtesy of Mixed Magic Theater

The highlight is "Freedom And The Arts," a sold-out event on Feb. 21 which will feature an important conversation with Senator Jack Reed and Congressman Gabe Amo. Moderated by Jonathan Pitts-Wiley, the discussion will focus on freedom, the arts and the contemporary American landscape for both artists and arts supporters.

Mixed Magic's Black History Month celebration continues with "Rise to Black: All God's Children," a theatrical experience featuring local talent performing established works ranging from Nikki Giovanni to August Wilson and original works from Bernadet Pitts-Wiley, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, and more.

Performances will be held on Feb. 22 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 23 at 2 p.m. For more information or for tickets click [here](#).



RHODE ISLAND
**COALITION OF
BLACK WOMEN**

Image above courtesy of RI Coalition of Black Women

Moot Court - Empowering Future Advocates

RI Coalition of Black Women is proud to host the 2025 Moot Court Experience for Rhode Island girls in grades 6-12, scheduled for March 29, 2025. This hands-on, immersive program introduces young women to the legal field, guided by law student mentors who help bring the courtroom experience to life.

One of the most transformative aspects of this program is the confidence-building that occurs as girls find their voice while learning the civic process. Notes the organization: "We recognize that young people must feel included in the system to become civically engaged. By equipping them with knowledge and advocacy skills, we are laying the foundation for stronger, more empowered communities."

To learn more about 2025 Moot Court, please contact Angela Tucker Alston RICBW President at info@ricbw.org.

FIFA Foundation Picks Project GOAL As A Program Of Impact

Project GOAL is celebrating a remarkable accomplishment! FIFA Foundation has selected the Providence-based non-profit as one of only four in the U.S. and six in North America to receive its signature grant for using the power of soccer to affect positive social change.

"It is with great pride that we announce that our FIFA Foundation grant application has been selected out of thousands of applicants from across the globe for the third year in a row," said Project Goal Executive Director and Co-Founder Darius Shirzadi. "To receive this grant is a tremendous honor. We are one of the originators of the "Sport For Good" and specifically "Soccer For Good" industry in North America. Soccer For Good is defined as using the sport for a positive social good. Rather than trying to focus on developing a soccer players' talent exclusively, we focus on the person's overall success."



Photos courtesy of Project GOAL

A record 130 entities from 54 countries were selected by FIFA Foundation to receive funding for soccer-related social projects. The two-year grant will help Project GOAL sustain and enhance programming in Central Falls and Providence. Over the past 21 years, the organization has positively impacted over 2,000 Rhode Island middle school youth, achieving a 96% high school graduation rate and 90% college continuation.



“The students we serve often face economic hardships, language barriers, and limited access to quality after-school programming,” said Shirzadi. “Many come from immigrant and first-generation families who are striving to provide better opportunities for their children. By combining academic support with the motivation and structure of soccer, we address these challenges in a holistic way. Our program fosters accountability, responsibility, and resilience, helping students stay on track academically while building essential life skills.”

POC is proud to support Project GOAL's mission. To join their efforts, donate, partner, volunteer, or simply spread the word, get involved by visiting [here](#).

Transform Rhode Island Scholarship Deadline of March 31 Is Near

POC is looking for every single high school student in Rhode Island to apply for the [Transform Rhode Island Scholarship \(TRIS\)](#), a unique opportunity for young people to use their voice and share their ideas to create real change.

We need your help. Tell your friends, colleagues, kids and neighbors about this amazing opportunity for high school students to share their ideas to create real change.

Here's how it works:

Students must simply answer one question: ***If you had \$1 million to improve the lives of those who need it most in RI, how would you do it?***

Papitto Opportunity Connection will invest \$1 million to make the winning idea a reality AND the winner will receive a \$25,000 scholarship! Nine finalists win scholarships between \$5,000 and \$15,000.



2024 Transform RI Scholarship recipients. Pictured above from left to right: Caroline Kanaczet, St. Mary Academy-Bay View; Pummukau Harris, The Met High School; Adrian Bautista, Providence; Naomi Delgado Pedraza, Central Falls High School; John Tarantino, POC Managing Partner; Sebastian Connolly, 2024 Transform RI Scholarship Winner, Classical High School; Barbara Papitto, POC Founder; Jason Lebrun, La Salle Academy; Katelyn Santilli, La Salle Academy; Reyann Datta, Moses Brown; Folajimi Olagundoye, Blackstone Valley Prep; Zachary Jean-Philippe, Cranston West; Mariely Madera, Moses Brown.

TRIS is open to **ALL** RI high school students. We're looking for unique and innovative ideas that would create real change in RI's communities of need.

Applications are accepted until March **31, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.** Apply [here](#).

Follow [@TransformRI](#) on Instagram and spread the word about this amazing opportunity for RI high school students.

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Papitto Opportunity Connection

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