

Papitto Opportunity Connection

March 2025

Amos House Receives \$1 Million Innovation Challenge Grant

Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) is investing \$1 million in a first of its kind program to increase access to behavioral health and primary care services for justice involved individuals and people in recovery in Rhode Island. The \$1 Million Innovation Challenge Grant, awarded to The Clinic at [Amos House](#), highlights POC's continued dedication to initiatives that drive systemic change across the state. The Clinic currently operates on a small scale out of Amos House's Community Center — a center in Providence that is visited daily by over 1,000 individuals.

Pictured below from left to right: POC Managing Director, John Tarantino, POC Founder, Barbara Papitto, Amos House CEO, Eileen Hayes; Amos House Director of Health Services, Sarah Martino.



“POC works to empower RI non-profits that create pathways to success in communities facing the most need. We are confident The Clinic will remove barriers to essential medical services,” said POC Founder Barbara Papitto.

“Since 2022, Amos House has more than doubled their program’s capacity, increasing employment placement rates and wages by over 30%. We’re proud to support these outcomes.”

amos  HOUSE

Designed to meet the unique needs of marginalized Rhode Islanders, The Clinic is a licensed behavioral health and ambulatory care facility that will offer mental health and substance use counseling, psychiatric care, integrated medical care and other support services. In addition to helping patients access health insurance, The Clinic pledges to serve all clients regardless of their insurer, insurance status, or ability to pay for care.

To learn more, click [here](#).

POC To Continue Small Grant Funding

“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.”

This year, POC will make approximately \$6 million in unsolicited grants to Rhode Island non-profits under both the small grant program as well as the \$1 Million Dollar Innovation Challenge. POC also continues to fund millions of dollars in multi-year grants that were previously awarded.



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.

401Gives: A Powerful Day Of Giving For Our Communities

For the third year in a row, POC is proud to be the lead sponsor of [401Gives](#), Rhode Island’s statewide day of giving in support of local nonprofits, including many POC grantees. Over the past five years, 401Gives has raised \$14 million to fund critical work that strengthens our communities.



Image courtesy of 401Gives

Last year, more than 16,000 donors contributed over 25,000 gifts. On April 1, we hope even more Rhode Islanders will rally behind these vital organizations. With nonprofit funding facing increasing challenges, 401Gives is a powerful opportunity to provide stability and support at a critical time.

Celebrating Women's History Month

To celebrate Women's History Month the [Women's Fund of RI](#) hosted, "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations," where a panel of distinguished Rhode Island educators took center stage, with several POC supported organizations offering invaluable insights into fostering female leadership.



Pictured above from left to right: Khadija Lewis Khan, Executive Director, Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center; Patti DiCenso, Chair of the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education; Senator Jack Reed; Touba Ghadessi, Provost, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD); and Shannon Carroll, President & CEO, Genesis Center. Photo courtesy of Senator Jack Reed.

Senator Jack Reed joined the discussion which focused on the transformative power of education and mentorship. Provost Touba Ghadessi of the [Rhode Island School of Design \(RISD\)](#) brought her expertise in higher education, emphasizing the importance of cultivating creative and intellectual growth in women.

Patti DiCenso, Chair of the [Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education](#), shared her perspective on shaping foundational education, highlighting the need for equitable access and support for young girls.



Image above courtesy of Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center

Khadija Lewis Khan, Executive Director of [Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center](#), addressed the critical role of early childhood education in laying the groundwork for future success, underscoring the importance of nurturing confidence and potential from a young age.

Shannon Carroll, President & CEO of the [Genesis Center](#), discussed her work in providing educational and career opportunities to underserved communities, emphasizing the power of education to transform lives.

These panelists engaged in a dynamic conversation, sharing strategies for inspiring the next generation of women leaders, building community collaboration, and strengthening society through education. Their collective wisdom highlighted the diverse pathways to empowerment and the enduring impact of women educators in Rhode Island.

Refugee Dream Center Upholds Promise To Serve

"It's a home away from home for refugees," that's how Teddi Jallow describes the [Refugee Dream Center](#) (RDC). For the past 15 years, the post resettlement refugee agency has worked to create a sense of family and community for refugees who are far away from loved ones. As Executive Director, Jallow relies on a team of volunteers to run the Providence non-profit. Together, they help refugees gain access to essential resources, case management services and over 20 enrichment classes a week. But a federal Stop Work Order in January led to five layoffs, a shuttered 'Reception and Placement' department, and a community living in fear.

"When a refugee is brought to the U.S., the U.S. Government agrees to support them for their first 90 days in America. With the Stop Work Order, the U.S. Government essentially told these families they were on their own," Jallow said. "We are still committed to serving our 2,700 community members, 49 of which are directly impacted by the Stop Work order. Those 49 were promised financial support by the U.S. government and now are relying on us to fill in that gap."



Images above courtesy of the Refugee Dream Center

Jallow says asylum seekers and humanitarian parolees are also reeling from President Trump's immigration policies. This population makes up more than 70% of the people RDC serves, driving demand for services higher than it has ever been before. "We have fewer staff, and the staff we have are at capacity. We are relying now more than ever on volunteers to help run these classes, and donations to help with supporting these families and their basic human needs. Without volunteers and community support, RDC would not be able to provide essential resources, case management services and over 20 classes a week to families in need."

To learn how you can get involved with the Refugee Dream Center, click [here](#).

Deadline Extended For The Transform RI Scholarship To April 7th!

We want every single high school student in Rhode Island to apply for the [Transform Rhode Island Scholarship](#) (TRIS), which offers a unique chance for Rhode Island high school students to win big while making a difference in communities that need it most in our state.

So, for the past few weeks, community leader [Chachi Carvalho](#) and former TRIS winners and finalists including Nico Upegui, Zach Pinto, Caroline Kanaczet, Reyan Datta and Keyla Cintron and have been hosting TRIS workshops across the state encouraging students to apply.



Above: TRIS representatives Chachi Carvahlo and Deb Weinreich participated in West Warwick High School's Fearless Friday and encouraged all students to apply.

Now 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 in their community.

Students 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?*
- Students can submit an essay, video or multimedia presentation.
- The winning idea receives **\$1 million** to make it a reality, plus a \$25,000 scholarship!
- Nine finalists win scholarships between \$5,000 and \$15,000.
- **IMPORTANT:** We're not looking for how a student would donate to invest in existing organizations. We want unique big ideas on how to improve RI communities most in need.



Above: 2023 TRIS scholarship finalist Nico Upegui, the TRIS Lead Ambassador, presented this amazing opportunity at his alma mater, North Providence High School.

As added incentive, the school with the most TRIS entries will receive \$5,000. Out of that amount, \$2,500 will be designated for the students to be used for the Prom and \$2,500 will be awarded to the faculty.

The deadline for applications is now April 7, 2025. You can apply [here](#).

Generation Citizen: Empowering Youth Voices In Democracy

In today's ever-changing world, engaging young people in the democratic process is more critical than ever. [Generation Citizen](#) (GC) is a non-profit organization, founded in 2010 by Brown University alum, Scott Warren, dedicated to amplifying the voices of young people through community-based civics education. By equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and belief that they can make a difference, GC is fostering a new generation of active and engaged citizens. Thanks to a grant from POC, this program will continue to educate and empower young people in Rhode Island to be active members of our democracy.

GC partners with public and charter schools in Bristol-Warren, Central Falls, East Providence, Providence and Woonsocket, teaching students the civic skills and knowledge they need to be successful citizens.



Images above courtesy of Generation Citizen

In 2023-2024 school year, GC worked in 29 schools, with 76 teachers, providing 5,000 RI students a hands-on project-based civics education.

GC's program involves students selecting an issue in their community, researching its causes, and developing an action plan to address it. This hands-on approach helps students understand how governments function and how they can make a difference. For example, students in Rhode Island focused on increasing mental health access for immigrant students. They advocated for a state bill requiring the Department of Education to develop and provide a mental health curriculum for schools, coordinating a letter-writing campaign and meeting with elected officials.

According to Kristina Pires, the Executive Director of Generation Citizen, "Papitto Opportunity Connection's generous support has been instrumental in strengthening Rhode

Island's democracy by enabling Generation Citizen to equip over 5,000 RI students with the civic skills needed to become effective change-makers in their communities. Through this partnership, we've cultivated a new generation of engaged citizens across Bristol-Warren, Central Falls, East Providence, Providence, and Woonsocket who now possess both the belief they can make a difference and the practical skills to transform that belief into meaningful civic action."

Healthier Environments And Equitable Futures

Planting the seeds of change. That is the driving force of [Roots2Empower](#), a social and environmental justice organization that is creating positive change by integrating STEAM education, environmental connection, and civic engagement in several of RI's urban core cities. Through its Green Futures program, Pawtucket youth are exploring agriculture, nutrition, and climate science throughout the school year. By engaging students in hands-on projects such as composting demonstrations, hydroponic growth, and herbal medicine, Green Futures nurtures curiosity and problem-solving skills and opens doors to sustaining careers in the trades and beyond.



Image above courtesy of Roots2Empower

Roots2Empower brought together youth, parents, educators, and local leaders to discuss strategies for reducing environmental hazards and shaping greener futures in advance of Rhode Island's 2025 Climate Action Plan. The findings were submitted to the state.

Roots2Empower recently held a virtual entrepreneurship cohort, preparing a diverse network of future business owners with the skills to launch sustainable, community-centered enterprises.

The organization remains dedicated to uplifting all Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls residents, ensuring healthier environments and equitable opportunities for future generations.

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100 Westminster Street Suite 105 | Providence, RI
02903 US

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