

POC Grant Cycle Update

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Papitto Opportunity Connection's (POC) Board of Trustees are currently reviewing nearly 150 grant requests from Rhode Island nonprofit organizations made during the December 2025 grant cycle for both operational (small) grants and the POC Million Dollar Innovation Challenge grant programs.

Organizations that applied for funding will be notified of awards in April.

The next open grant cycle will take place June 1-15, 2026.



2026 Transform Rhode Island Scholarship Kick Off

[Apply Here](#)

Transform Rhode Island Scholarship (TRIS) recipients recently reunited with POC Founder Barbara Papitto and others for a fun afternoon of bowling and brainstorming at Lang's Bowlarama to officially kick off the 2026 Transform Rhode Island Scholarship.

Now entering its fifth year, TRIS offers Rhode Island high school students a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact in communities across the state—while competing for substantial scholarships.



2026 Transform RI Scholarship

How does it work?

It's easy! Answer ONE question: **"If you had \$1 million dollars to improve the lives of those who need it most in Rhode Island, how would you do it?"**

Tell us your idea.
It's that simple.

Who can apply?

Every high school student enrolled in a public, private, parochial, charter, or is home schooled in the RI can apply.

What can I win?


\$1 MILLION will be invested in the top idea & the winner will also receive a \$25,000 scholarship. Nine other TRIS finalists will be awarded scholarships worth between \$5,000 - \$15,000.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

APPLY JAN 15 - MAR 31, 2026!

Questions?
info@pocfoundation.com



 @transformri

Transform
Rhode Island
Scholarship

Papitto
Opportunity
Connection

To apply, RI high school students are asked to answer ONE question:

If you had \$1 million to improve communities that need it most in Rhode Island, how would you do it?

POC will invest **\$1 million** to bring the winning idea to life. The top winner will receive a **\$25,000 scholarship** and **nine other finalists** will earn scholarships ranging from **\$5,000 to \$15,000**.

Applications are accepted from January 15 through March 31, 2026. For more information or to apply, visit [here](#).

Spread the word and follow @transformri on Instagram and TikTok for updates.

Since 2022, POC has invested more than \$4.1 million in TRIS scholarships and incentives. To date, 36 students from Rhode Island public, private, and charter schools have received scholarships. View past winners and their inspiring ideas click [here](#).



Precision Oncology For All

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“My enemy is cancer. The enemy of my enemy is precision oncology. Precision oncology will defeat cancer,” said John Tarantino, POC Managing Trustee and CEO of Iylon Precision Oncology, [speaking in December at the 2025 Forttuna Global Excellence Awards in Dubai](#).

He addressed a global audience of healthcare pioneers, business leaders, and innovators recognized for driving meaningful impact worldwide.

Tarantino spoke passionately about the transformative promise of personalized cancer care—treatments guided not by one-size-fits-all protocols, but by each patient’s unique genomic and tumor profile. He described precision oncology as “our best hope for giving patients a new option—where none may have existed

before,” urging patients, caregivers, and clinicians to consider genomic-guided treatment when confronting the disease.

Here in Rhode Island, the Lyon Foundation, with support from POC, is working to ensure that life-saving precision oncology is accessible to every patient—not just those with financial means. Far too many patients are denied these advances due to cost barriers.

The Foundation was created to close that gap by providing financial support, education, and access to personalized cancer-care pathways—affirming a simple belief: no patient should be denied their best chance at survival because of cost.



Project Undercover

[Learn More](#)

As costs continue to rise, families in underserved communities are increasingly challenged to afford basic necessities—including diapers. In fact, 1 in 3 families struggle to purchase diapers, which can cost up to \$100 for a month’s supply. In Rhode Island alone, more than 45,000 families don’t have access to basic essentials, including clean diapers.

Project Undercover, a nonprofit organization supported by POC, is working to address this need by providing—at no cost—resources including diapers, wipes, underwear, and socks to thousands of Rhode Islanders in need.

“Diapers, like food and shelter, are a critical component of the health and general well-being of Rhode Island’s children in need,” said Project Undercover Founder Richard Fleischer. “Add to that underwear, socks and wipes—these types of items that are somewhat ‘Undercover’—and you indeed have the bare necessities for our kids.”

Project Undercover, the state’s only organization that is a member of the National Diaper Bank Network and the Baby2Baby National Network, is making a big impact in Rhode Island. In 2025 Project Undercover distributed:

- 580,000 diapers
- 2.87 million wipes
- 2,000 pairs of underwear
- 21,000 pairs of socks.

“These numbers represent more than supplies—they represent relief for parents, confidence for children, and stability for families facing hardship,” said Project Undercover’s Executive Director Diane LeValley. “As the need continues to increase year after year, our commitment remains strong to ensure every child has the essentials they need to thrive.”



**Rhode Island
For Community**

And Justice (RICJ)

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Did you know that for over seven decades, Rhode Island for Community and Justice (RICJ) has stood as a vanguard against bias and systemic racism? Founded in 1952, RICJ began with a profound commitment to fostering understanding across all races, cultures, and religions.

Today, that mission has evolved into a statewide engine for youth empowerment and restorative justice.

RICJ's work centers on those often sidelined by systemic inequality. Serving a population that is 77% female and 85% lower-income, including many first-generation immigrants from Hispanic, Haitian, and West African backgrounds, RICJ provides the tools for young leaders (ages 14–24) to challenge the status quo. Through initiatives like the Youth Action Council, Youth Career Pathway Program, and the Young Women's Equity Coalition, RICJ isn't just teaching advocacy; it's building a generation of changemakers. RICJ's impact is particularly fundamental within the legal system.

“Through our Juvenile Hearing Board, we provide essential support and advocacy within the juvenile justice system, helping to redirect youth toward positive pathways while advocating for more equitable and restorative approaches to youth involvement in the legal system,” said RICJ Executive Director Rose Albert. “Our collective impact over seven decades demonstrates the transformative power of centering youth voice and leadership in the work of reducing bias and building an inclusive Rhode Island.”

Albert says Juvenile Hearing Boards provide youth who commit non-violent offenses with a pre-court diversion alternative to incarceration, and in several cases attributed to 70% recidivism rate. Currently, JHB and diversion services serve 25 RI cities and towns, RICJ's goal in 2026 is to expand its reach to 30 communities, ensuring equitable support is available statewide.



Changing Lives With Music

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Since 2021, POC has invested over \$3 million in RI Philharmonic, directly supporting the growth of the Victoria's Dream Project, a free after-school strings program for Pawtucket students in grades 3-5.

POC's support has also fueled RI Philharmonic's [Link Up](#) education concerts, expanded financial aid at The Music School, more diverse programming for the Orchestra, and other equity initiatives. Tens-of-thousands of students in over 100 schools and hundreds of thousands of concert goers from every corner of RI and beyond have benefited from this partnership.

“One of the things that’s been so transformative about our relationship with POC is that they have provided us the funding to do things that we’ve wanted to do but did not have the resources [for],” said RI Philharmonic Executive Director David Beauchesne. “We are featuring more composers on our programs from different backgrounds. We have hired a much more diverse faculty. We are better representatives of our community.”

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