

# Papitto Opportunity Connection

November 2024

## POC's Third Annual Connector Conference

"The Papitto Opportunity Connection's Connector Conference was the perfect chance to connect with fellow nonprofits and gain valuable insights," said Dianny Melusky of [PCE Development](#). "What's even more inspiring is that POC is just about to turn 4 years old, yet its impact on Rhode Island's community is already profound, building a legacy of support, empowerment and positive change. Here's to many more years of collaboration and growth!"

That was the sentiment heard repeatedly from many of the more than 200 representatives from over 150 RI nonprofit organizations who attended the third annual POC Connector Conference, held recently at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick.



Top photo above: Moderator, Adriana Dawson. Bottom panel photo, from left to right: Zachary Niedler, Paola Fernandez, Larry Wagner, and Gregg Perry.

The conference opened with a Meet the Funders panel, moderated by Adriana Dawson, Verizon's Regional Director of Community Engagement. The panel included Paola Fernandez, SVP and Community Development Officer, Centreville Bank; Larry Warner Chief Impact and Equity Officer, The United Way; Zachary Nieder, Senior Strategic Initiative Officer at the Rhode Island Foundation; and Gregg Perry, representing Papitto Opportunity Connection and founder of The Perry Group.

This knowledgeable group of some of the state's leading sources of funding provided insight and guidance to nonprofits seeking support for their work.



Pictured from left to right: Cheryl Space, Community Libraries of Providence; Omar Bah, Refugee Dream Center; and Cortney Nicolato, United Way of Rhode Island.

Attendees then participated in workshops that ranged from Learning about the United Way's Alliance for Nonprofit Impact, to How to Build an Effective Board of Directors to Cyber Security for Nonprofits and Effective Use of AI.



Pictured above: POC's 2024 Connector Conference attendees.

The day-long conference concluded with a fun-filled session of speed networking that mirrored the mission of Papitto Opportunity Connection — connecting to support one another.

“I hope to see Rhode Island become one community and be connected,” said Papitto Opportunity Connection Founder Barbara Papitto. “I would love that,” she added.



Pictured from left to right: Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Paige Parks, Michelle Carr, Barbara Papitto, Christine McGinn, and John Tarantino.

### DownCity Design Expands Programming

It's been an exciting year for [DownCity Design](#), a Providence-based community design studio that empowers people to imagine and create better futures for their communities by using design skills to improve the places where they live, work, and play.

DownCity Design recently completed a multi-year facility renovation project and with support from the Papitto Opportunity Connection, the organization has expanded its programming and serves more youth and teens.



Image above: Courtesy of DownCity Design

Funding from POC enabled the organization to serve 104 additional Providence youth through its free programs this year, reaching a total of 305 young people, who face multiple barriers to success in school and beyond. Participants learn new skills and gain confidence as problem solvers and strive to be leaders in their communities.

Overall, since DownCity Design was launched in 2009, over 3000 participants in the free afterschool and summer design programs have collaboratively built more than 100 permanent amenities for public spaces in and around Providence, including community gardens, outdoor classrooms for public schools and creative play structures for parks.

### National Apprenticeship Week

In recognition of the 10th annual National Apprenticeship Week (11/17-11/23), the Papitto Opportunity Connection would like to highlight the good work of [Building Futures](#), a

nonprofit organization creating opportunity through registered apprenticeships for low-income Rhode Islanders living in communities in the most need.

Building Futures' Registered Apprenticeship program is raising incomes and creating opportunity for hundreds of Rhode Islanders while giving employers access to the skilled workforce they need to drive our economy forward.



This year Building Futures is celebrating:

- Over 430 people who graduated pre-apprenticeship and entered a building and construction trades registered apprenticeship program.
- New programming at the Adult Correctional Institute that creates a path to a rewarding, family-sustaining career for people when they re-enter the community.
- New Registered Apprenticeship pathways in non-trade industries that have created opportunities for over a thousand Rhode Islanders.
- Nearly 200 new non-trade employees who are using Registered Apprenticeship for the first time.

Building Futures is expanding Registered Apprenticeship employment opportunities in the public sector, supporting training for apprentices in the clean green energy economy, and leveraging registered apprenticeships to help solve industry-wide issues, like recovery and mental health.

Photo below: Building Futures President & CEO Andrew Cortés with apprentices.



“With support from POC, we are leveraging the power of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) in communities historically left out of economic opportunity,” said Andrew Cortés, Building Futures President & CEO and POC Advisory Board Member. “Over the last three years, more than 1200 people have entered employment as apprentices in Rhode Island, including 85 Building Futures pre-apprenticeship graduates, more than 300 entrants in new non-trade RA programs we have helped employers create, and people entering construction trade RA programs.”

Photo below: Building Futures President & CEO Andrew Cortés (bottom far right) with staff and recent pre-apprenticeship graduates.



### POC's Grant Portal Will Accept New Applications December 1—17

POC's grant application portal will be open for the next round of funding December 1 through December 17 at 11:59pm. POC grants will support programming that creates systemic change in the areas of education, job skills training, entrepreneurship, healthcare or housing.

For the Million Dollar Innovation Challenge, nonprofits are encouraged to collaborate on proposals to leverage resources and cultivate partnerships. Up to two \$1-million grants will be awarded as a result of the December applications. POC will also award smaller grants to support organizations with demonstrated needs of varying sizes.

Applications for both grant opportunities will be awarded through a competitive RFP process via our online [application portal](#).

All organizations applying for a grant must submit an online application to be considered. This process applies to first time grant applicants and those organizations seeking additional funding.

There is NO other mechanism for requesting a grant. Members of the Boards of Trustees and Boards of Advisors will NOT accept grant requests personally, and any such request will NOT be considered. You do not have to know someone to have your grant request considered.

In 2025, the Million Dollar Innovation Challenge will increase to \$5 million annually and smaller grants will be capped at \$1 million. In 2026, the Million Dollar Innovation Challenge will be funded at \$6 million, and the small grant program will sunset.



**We wish you and your family a safe and joyful Thanksgiving!**

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