

Funding Public K-12 Education in RI

Conversation Toolkit

Share your perspective, and big ideas, on what a fair and effective funding formula looks like for Rhode Island's students and educators.

**Rhode Island
Foundation**



Annenberg Institute

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Table of Contents

About	3
Blue Ribbon Commission Members	5
RI Funding Formula 101	6
Share Your Ideas	7
Planning a Conversation	9
Sample Conversation Structure	11
Conversation Prompts	12
Submit Your Ideas	14

About

In late 2024, the Foundation partnered with the nationally recognized Annenberg Institute at Brown University to undertake an effort to study, assess, and make recommendations for an improved, equitable public education funding formula in Rhode Island.

We've decided to embark on this work because we know that education is the great equalizer. It is the cornerstone of healthy and prosperous communities. It supports growth, creates opportunities, enhances economic mobility, and produces healthy people and strong communities. A thriving state depends on a public education system working equitably and urgently to prepare all students to succeed in life and access pathways to opportunity.

Helping to guide this work is a Blue Ribbon Commission, comprised of local education leaders and trusted community partners. The Commission is co-chaired by David N. Cicilline, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation, and Nora E. Gordon, Distinguished Professor of Public Policy at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy.

The Commission's work will culminate in a report later in 2025 that includes recommendations for an improved education funding formula for Rhode Island. The report will incorporate feedback from local and national experts, stakeholders, community members, working groups, and the public.

About

The Blue Ribbon Commission, Rhode Island Foundation, and Annenberg Institute are encouraging community groups and individuals to engage in this process by submitting their perspectives on what a fair and effective funding formula looks like via this toolkit. All submissions from the community will inform the final report.

This year-long project is intended to tee-up proposed legislation for the General Assembly to consider, aimed at improving the way we fund public K-12 education in Rhode Island by modernizing our funding formula and ensuring that it is fair and effective.

Read on to learn more about Rhode Island's education funding formula, to start a conversation on this topic, and to submit your ideas for funding formula improvements.

With questions or for assistance using this tool kit please contact Annie Pease at apeace@rifoundation.org.

The Blue Ribbon Commission is comprised of local education leaders and community partners.



RI Funding Formula 101

There is a set of slides, available [here in English](#) and [here in Spanish](#), that offer a high-level look at how the education funding formula in Rhode Island works.

Before beginning a conversation about what a fair and effective funding formula looks like for Rhode Island's students and educators, it may be helpful to review those slides.

Share Your Ideas

Rhode Island has a unique opportunity to develop a new approach to funding public education that promotes equal educational opportunities to every single student in our state.

While Annenberg, the Commission, and local stakeholders are drawing on national evidence and their own experience and expertise to inform recommendations, community voices are also needed as part of this effort.

That's where you come in.

With this toolkit you'll be able to brainstorm on your own, or convene a conversation with colleagues, friends, neighbors, or relatives to offer your perspective on what a fair and effective public education funding formula looks like in Rhode Island. All ideas that are submitted will be reviewed as the final report is produced.

Share Your Ideas

When?

Now! Submit your ideas by **May 30, 2025**. The submission form is available [here in English](#) and [here in Spanish](#).

Where?

Host an in-person or virtual conversation, or brainstorm on your own. There are several platforms and ways for people to connect for a virtual conversation.

Who?

Everyone. Brainstorm on your own or plan a conversation with community members. Flip forward in this guide for some tips.

Why?

Rhode Island has an opportunity to be a national leader and develop an education funding formula that reflects our values and supports the success of all students.

Planning a Conversation

What is the purpose of this conversation?

To collect input on what makes a fair and effective funding formula.

When is the right time of day or day of the week for this conversation? Should the conversation be in-person or virtual?

This is up to your schedule and what you think might work best for your guests.

What information do my guests need so that they can participate?

This is about logistics. Location, date and time, transportation, a virtual meeting room login, and any background information from this toolkit that you'd like to provide ahead of time.

How will we capture recommendations to submit?

Take good notes during your conversation, and then upload your ideas to the submission form. Or, open the submission form during your meeting and type your responses right into it. The form is available [here in English](#) and [here in Spanish](#).

What will the follow-up be for the people who attend?

Consider sharing the draft responses with the group that you convene before submitting your ideas.

Sample Conversation Structure

Welcome The host welcomes everyone to the conversation and shares the purpose of meeting, and what guests should anticipate doing while they are together.

Introductions Ask your guests to be as present for the conversation as possible. If appropriate, provide an opportunity for guests to briefly introduce themselves.

Conversation agreements Setting conversation agreements is important for equitable dialogue. Hosts can provide them beforehand and ask for guest feedback, or the group can develop a set of agreements when they are together. Here are some examples: Leave your stripes at the door. Show respect and reserve judgment. Be curious and listen to understand. Be authentic. Note areas of agreement and disagreement.

Conversation prompts After the host opens the conversation, consider walking through the prompts and questions included in the next section of this toolkit.

Closing Thank everyone for joining and note next steps for participants.

Conversation Prompts

Feel free to use the conversation prompts that follow to guide your discussion.

Take good notes during your conversation and then upload your ideas to the submission form. Or, open the submission form and type your responses right into it.

The form is available [here in English](#) and [here in Spanish](#).

Conversation Prompts

Share your favorite memory from grade school.

In recalling your school experience, did you have all the resources and supports while in school that you needed to succeed? If not, what was missing?

What do you think it means for students to get a good education?

How do you know when students are getting a good education?

Do you think schools are being sufficiently funded now in Rhode Island?

What is working, and what isn't working?

In your opinion how should state and local government share the cost of public education?

In your opinion what would it look like for students living in poverty, multilingual learners, and students with special needs to be served well by Rhode Island's public schools?

How should state and local government share the costs associated with school transportation, and school buildings?

When thinking about school funding, how should the state and local government plan for unexpected costs associated with short-term and longer-term changes in community needs (such as changes in enrollment)?

How should dollars flow to public charter schools? How should dollars flow to public career and technical education programs?

Submit Your Ideas

Navigate to the submission form available [here in English](#) and [here in Spanish](#), complete the form, and submit your responses.

What happens after submission?

All ideas presented through the submission form will be shared with the Blue Ribbon Commission and Annenberg Institute.

Later this year, Annenberg will analyze all input surfaced through the Commission and community and incorporate it into final recommendations for an improved education funding formula in Rhode Island.

Thank you!

For sharing your perspective, and big ideas, on what a fair and effective funding formula looks like for Rhode Island's students and educators.

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