

Housing and Economic Mobility

We're identifying and addressing barriers to affordable housing throughout the state, reducing economic disparities, and improving household financial stability and equitable wealth building.

Economic opportunity should be within reach for all Rhode Islanders, including affordable housing, career mobility, and generational wealth building, particularly within historically underserved communities.

Focus Areas

- Expanding availability and access to affordable housing and supports for Rhode Islanders experiencing housing insecurity.
- Increasing access to effective workforce development programs, including those with wrap-around services and training and credentialing for high-demand jobs and industries.
- Enhancing financial well-being in underserved communities through initiatives that increase access to financial education and the ability to apply that learning to achieve long-term financial security.
- Innovative, collaborative initiatives beyond the stated focus areas with the potential to drive greater impact on housing and economic mobility – particularly those with an equity focus and or advancing solutions across multiple community priorities.

Case Studies

Building Futures

Building Futures meets employer and industry need for skilled workers through the Registered Apprenticeship system while creating family sustaining career opportunities for low-income diverse residents of Rhode Island.

The Foundation has given Building Futures almost a million dollars since 2016.

With nearly 300 graduates, Building Futures boasts a 95% job retention rate after one year and 80% after 10 years.

The 18- to 35-year-olds who enroll in Building Futures all come from low-income backgrounds—80% are from minority groups, and 50% were previously incarcerated. Most learn of the program through word of mouth. With nearly 300 graduates, Building Futures boasts a 95% job retention rate after one year and 80% after 10 years.

Rhode Island Foundation was an early investor. “The Foundation has funded our direct strategy work,” says Andrew Cortes, Founder & Executive Director, “and the grants we received have led to systemic change within the construction industry and workforce development. We’re creating the next generation of laborers, as well as the next generation of leaders.”

Genesis Center

Supported with over \$300,000 in Foundation-directed funding over the last three years, Genesis Center serves more than 1,100 adults annually. The organization provides education, job

training and support services to people of diverse cultures all aimed at encouraging economic independence.

For example, Genesis serves Rhode Islanders like Katia, who moved from Haiti to Providence to provide a better life for her son. She received a bachelor’s degree in law in Haiti, but decided to pursue her other love—the medical field—here in the United States.

“I need to be involved in the country,” she said. “In Haiti and in the United States, I am conquering all my dreams to help people in multiple ways.”

A relative introduced her to Genesis so she could learn English. Once there, she discovered the nonprofit organization has so much more—such as the health care job training programs, GED classes, citizen preparation, childcare, and other services.

A recent \$115,000 grant from the Foundation, for example, allows Genesis to expand its workforce programs, like the one that is further shaping Katia’s life.

Shannon Carroll, Genesis Center President & CEO, recently said that the Genesis Center “would not be where we are right now” without the less restrictive grants given to the Center by the Foundation.

“They help us so much,” she said. “The Rhode Island Foundation, to me, is awesome. They really understand that nonprofits like ours need flexible funding so we can be adaptable to the community’s needs. Beyond the dollars, they give so much nonprofit support, whether it be leadership support or even board referrals... the Foundation is just an endless source of knowledge and expertise.”