



2025

# REPORT TO THE FIELD

**NEWARK PHILANTHROPIC LIAISON**

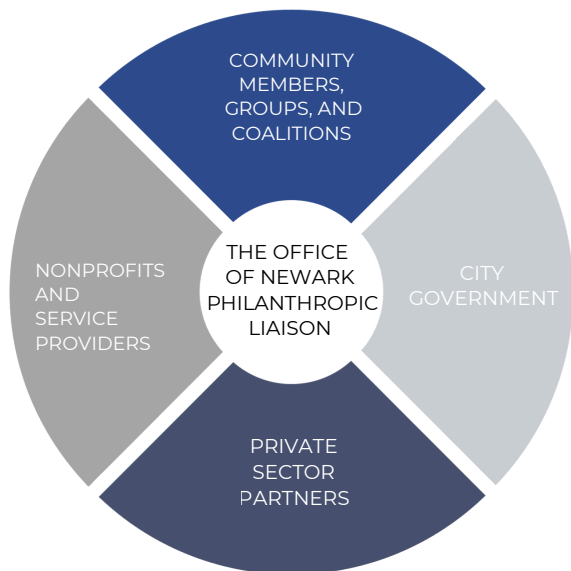
# INTRODUCTION

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the Office of Newark Philanthropic Liaison (NPL) in 2025, several themes emerge.

- Foundation leadership and collaboration in response to community challenges.
- New grant partnerships driven by local need and context.
- Engagement of regional and national foundations to collaborate with us on our progress towards a more equitable city.
- Continued investment in evidence-based programs and initiatives that improve the lives of Newark residents.
- Seminal reports and findings on issues of economic security and resident wealth.
- Policy roadmaps for action.
- Newark's state and national leadership as a model for innovative public policy solutions under the stewardship of Mayor Ras J. Baraka.

These reflections are at the core of the Newark Philanthropic Liaison model – a landmark collaboration between the City of Newark and the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers (CNJG) tasked with harnessing interest, fostering greater effectiveness, and attracting resources toward policy and programmatic areas that affect and improve the lives of Newark's residents. Supported by a dedicated cohort of funders through CNJG, the office is non-partisan and based in the Mayor's Office in Newark City Hall. The Liaison represents one of the nation's first formal partnerships between a city and the philanthropic community and has become a national model for public-private alliances.

## OUR MODEL



## OUR TEAM



**KEVIN CALLAGHAN**  
NEWARK PHILANTHROPIC  
LIAISON



**JESSICA DEBRAH**  
NEWARK PHILANTHROPIC  
LIAISON FELLOW

# 25 MILESTONES FOR 2025

Our mission to connect, convene, and leverage the talents and resources of the private sector and funding community with public leadership fulfills the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers mission to support and elevate New Jersey's philanthropic community through shared learning, collaborative and trusting relationships, network building, and leadership. In honor of the year 2025, we are pleased to share with you "25 Milestones for 2025."

## 1

### Newark Movement for Economic Equity

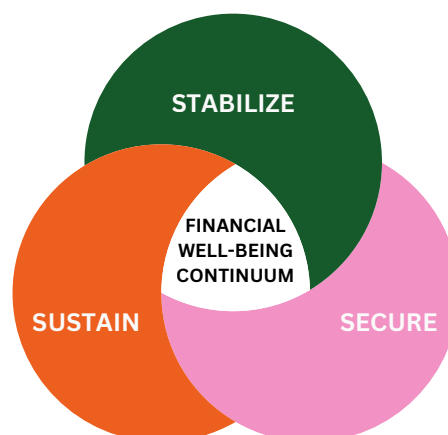
Released the findings of Newark's guaranteed income pilot, the Newark Movement for Economic Equity, at a community briefing. The NPL led the pilot from start to finish with support from the Newark funding community. The pilot established Newark as a leader in New Jersey and nationwide in cash policy.



## 2

### Newark Economic Empowerment Blueprint

Released an economic empowerment blueprint for residents. Funded by the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE), the report creates a framework, the Financial Well-Being Continuum, that codifies the City of Newark's myriad initiatives to grow local wealth and financial security. It assembles in one place a guide for residents to stabilize, secure, and sustain their finances for the long term.



# 3

## Newark Prosperity Hub

Collaborated with the United Way of Greater Newark and its Newark Prosperity Hub to begin implementation of the Newark economic empowerment blueprint by launching a new website with accessible resource guides, a financial “roadmap” for Newark residents to follow, and a resident-facing explainer video about the Newark Prosperity Hub and its services and partnerships.



# 5

## Cash Policies

Planned the launch of a statewide coalition to advocate for cash policies such as guaranteed income, an expanded child tax credit, baby bonds, and more. Coming on the heels of Newark’s guaranteed income pilot, the Bridge Project launched in New Jersey, offering guaranteed income to pregnant mothers in multiple cities, including Newark, Paterson, Trenton, and Southwest New Jersey.

# 4

## Food Assistance

Connected and convened Newark foundations during critical moments of federal uncertainty. When the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) came under threat in the Fall, Mayor Ras J. Baraka called the community together with a vision to create community food hubs. Newark Philanthropy answered the call, and we raised over \$500,000 in less than two weeks with a fund hosted by the United Way of Greater Newark to support the hubs. We continue to explore how to make these food hubs a permanent presence in our community.

# 6

## Housing Support

Secured a grant from Prudential Financial to hire a housing navigator to embed in Newark’s Office of Affordability and Sustainable Housing and build housing navigation capacity across Newark’s community development corporations (CDCs). The navigator placed more than 200 families in permanent housing in their first eight months. The NPL also continued to support Newark’s Office of Tenant Legal Services, which represents residents facing eviction through generous grant support from the Victoria Foundation.

## 7

**Summer Fun**

Identified \$35,000 to support Newark Summer Fun. The core function of Summer Fun is to address the myriad needs of youth, families, and Newark's neighborhoods as the weather warms and school comes to an end for the summer. It responds directly to a major equity gap facing Newark by providing near-daily opportunities for youth and families to participate in cultural, educational, and sports-related enrichment activities, while incorporating fun, play, and chances to foster a culture of reading.



## 8

**Summer Youth Employment Program**

Raised \$3.3 million for Newark's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), a landmark public-private partnership that combines private, city, and state funds to employ over 2,700 youth. A major focus of our work in the Office of Newark Philanthropic Liaison, Newark SYEP is now considered a model in New Jersey and nationally. The program provides youth with a job, mentorship, financial literacy training, exposure to career pathways, and an immediate economic boost.

## 9

**Newark Immigration Resource Hub**

Continued Support from the Newark funding community for an Immigrant Resource Hub, which began in late 2024, to provide wraparound services to Newark's immigrant community. Early discussions of the need for this intervention took place under the auspices of the Newark Funder Affinity Group.

# 10

## Community Impact Fund

Continued managing the Newark Community Impact Fund, which directly invests in local community programming and development opportunities for Newark residents and leaders. It also provides flexible grant capital that the NPL can deploy quickly for emerging needs.

# 12

## Firefighter Scholarship Fund

Partnered with the Community Foundation of New Jersey to create and incubate a Firefighter Scholarship Fund after the tragic death of two Newark firefighters, Wayne Brooks, Jr. and Augusto “Augie” Acabou. Developed at the request of Mayor Baraka, the NPL collaborated with a Newark firefighter to ensure that an initial set of donations of more than \$25,000 were secured, and a first round of scholarships were issued in 2025. The Fund will now become its own 501c3.



# 11

## Path Home Program

Leveraged the Community Impact Fund to purchase furniture for the first 25 apartments opened as part of Mayor Baraka’s Path Home program. The program is a partnership with the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) in which the City of Newark rehabilitates 200 NHA units to rapidly rehouse Newark residents.

# 13

## Ten Point Literacy Plan

Augmented Mayor Baraka’s community-wide goals in education, namely his Ten Point Literacy Plan and his commitment to re-establishing a collaborative working relationship between Newark’s district and charter sectors. Private funds deployed supported a literacy town hall in each ward of the city, the Mayor’s Book Club, a summer book distribution at an annual event called Reading Under the Stars, and general operating support for the Office of Comprehensive Community Education, which leads the Newark Literacy Coalition. The NPL also continued to participate in discussions among the district and charter sectors, the Mayor’s Office, and local foundations on the city’s enrollment system and data transparency, with the goal of formalizing a working partnership in 2026.



# 14

## Newark Grassroots Ecosystem

Participated on a steering committee throughout 2025 focused on strengthening grassroots organizations in Newark that do not have large staff or budgets and may need shared technical assistance, networking and learning opportunities, and fiscal sponsorship. Convened a meeting of all organizations that manage small grant programs to formalize a regular cadence of coordination that will help grassroots organizations access available grants in a way that is more streamlined and tailored to local needs.

# 16

## Newark's Growing Film Industry

Led the process of creating a team to apply for and implement a New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) Film Works grant. Newark is known as a city of arts and culture but is increasingly a city for film as Lionsgate is preparing to open a large studio in Newark's South Ward. This grant will train Newark residents to be production assistants on the growing number of projects originating in Newark.

# 15

## Centers for Hope

Allocated a grant of \$60,000 over two years to Newark's Centers of Hope. Mayor Baraka created Centers of Hope at the beginning of his administration as an extension of the City's recreation infrastructure. The Centers provide year-round enrichment for youth and families in neighborhoods that often lack access to a range of experiences.

# 17

## Aspen Ideas Economy Festival

Marking Prudential's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the Aspen Institute's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Aspen Ideas Economy Festival took place in Newark from October 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. The festival focused on people-centered economic growth and brought about 500 people from across the country to experience Newark's history, art, culture, and economic boom. The NPL planned and moderated a session with national foundations to discuss why Newark is primed and ready for investment.



# 18

## Funder Affinity Groups

Hosted two smaller group funder meetings on topics of interest and alignment between the City of Newark and the funding community. One meeting focused on Newark's national leadership on community public safety and violence prevention. The second meeting focused on aligning resources and strategies to address housing affordability as a collective through 2026 and beyond.

# 20

## Living Cities Collaboration

Welcomed Living Cities to Newark in 2025, thanks to a grant from Prudential Financial. Kevin Callaghan also participated in a session in Buffalo on equitable capital ecosystems in Central and Western New York. Living Cities is a member collaborative of leading philanthropic foundations and financial institutions committed to closing income and wealth gaps in the United States and building an economy that works for everyone. They will work with us in 2026 to explore the feasibility of a cooperative for small Newark-based contractors and developers to retain wealth in the community and help them bid on large development projects.

# 19

## Black Maternal Health

Thanks to the leadership of several philanthropic partners and New Jersey's former First Lady, Tammy Murphy, New Jersey has made significant strides in Black maternal health over the past several years. To showcase the work, the Burke Foundation, Ascend at the Aspen Institute, MERCK for Mothers, Community Health Acceleration Partnership, Turrell Fund, MCJ Amelior Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Bristol Myers Squibb supported the Courage in Care: Community Doulas and Joyful Revolution Birth exhibit at Newark ArtSpace. We hosted a Newark Funder Affinity Group Meeting in the space to bring awareness to the implementing partners in Newark and Essex County making significant strides in Black maternal health.



# 21

## **Surdna Foundation Newark Visit**

Planned a day-long site visit to Newark for the Surdna Foundation that showcased Newark's arts and culture scene, our commitment to inclusive economic growth, and our long-fought struggle for environmental justice.

# 23

## **Council of New Jersey Grantmakers 2025 Conference**

Participated in a panel discussion at the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers 2025 Conference for the Social Sector entitled "Driving Community Solutions through Public and Private Collaboration." Kevin Callaghan discussed his experience building partnerships in Newark and how it can inform communities around New Jersey.

# 25

## **Philanthropic Liaison Model**

Interest in the Newark Philanthropic Liaison model is at an all-time high. In 2025, Kevin participated in conversations with communities such as Orange County, California, Jackson, Mississippi, and the Portland, Oregon metro area about his role. The NPL role also continues to serve as a model right here in New Jersey. We look forward to more conversations in the future.

# 22

## **Poverty, Equity, and the Influencing Factors Symposium**

Moderated a panel discussion at a symposium organized by the REACH (Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health) Project entitled Poverty, Equity, and the Influencing Factors Symposium. The panel focused on people struggling to make ends meet and how they make ends meet.

# 24

## **Strategic Connections**

Provided thought partnership and made connections for nonprofit organizations strategizing on how to increase their impact in Newark throughout the year. In some cases, Kevin Callaghan also participated in conversations with at-risk nonprofits due to the loss of federal funds. Through networking interested foundations with these organizations, we helped to soften the blows of our changing federal funding landscape.

# UPCOMING

Up next in 2026 is a continued focus on building collaborative funding structures to tackle some of our biggest challenges, particularly improving housing affordability, driving more national investment in Newark, and continuing to spread the Newark Philanthropic Liaison model to communities that are ready to implement it.

We hope the examples enumerated above illustrate that when the public and private sectors lock arms and commit to true collaboration, anything is possible. Concrete examples in financial security, economic equity, health, education, homeless services, employment, and community building abound. In the spirit of partnership, none of the projects discussed in this report would have been possible without several nonprofit, philanthropic, and public organizations. This is truly a collaborative effort.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The position of Newark Philanthropic Liaison would not be possible without the leadership, guidance, and support of the following organizations and foundations:

**Bank of America**

**Burke Foundation**

**Community Foundation of New Jersey**

**Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation**

**Maher Charitable Foundation**

**MCJ Amelior Foundation**

**Prudential Foundation**

**Schumann Fund for New Jersey**

**Turrell Fund**

**Victoria Foundation**

We acknowledge the City of Newark for its commitment to collaborating with the position and elevating the voice of philanthropy.

A special thank you to the Community Foundation of New Jersey, which facilitates and manages grant funds for many of our partnerships. Additional gratitude to our key collaborators, including the Newark Alliance, Invest Newark, the United Way of Greater Newark, and Newark's community development and nonprofit community.