

Learning from each other

By Jill Pfitzenmayer, PhD, Vice President for Capacity Building

“One simple idea can be the catalyst for broadening our impact.”

“Collaboration and transparency are absolutely key to creating major change.”

These were just two of the many insights shared at the Foundation’s recent Best Practice Awards Learning Summit sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island. Now in their seventh year, the Best Practice Awards recognize outstanding accomplishments by nonprofit organizations in five areas, and have become an invaluable way to inspire and educate all the nonprofits in our community.

By learning about the innovative work of the awardees, others in the nonprofit field are able to gain insight and tailor their own approaches in ways that are proven to work. At this year’s learning summit at Rhode Island College, it was standing-room-only as the 2018 Best Practice Award recipients shared details of their winning projects in informative TED-style talks. Here’s a quick look at the awardees’ work:

Economic Progress Institute

Award Category: Advocacy and Communications

Presented for its “Medicaid Matters” campaign, which educated the public and policy makers about the importance of the program to low-income Rhode Islanders. The campaign used the personal stories of local Medicaid recipients and infographics to bring its advocacy tools to life. “One in three Rhode Islanders rely on Medicaid for health care. Because its cost consumes a large part of the state budget, cuts are always a threat. The campaign helped the program survive the budget process intact,” said Rachel Flum, executive director.

Providence Public Library

Award Category: Board and Staff Leadership

Presented for a three-stage strategic planning process: creating and implementing a new strategic plan and vision, supporting staff in meeting the plan’s goals and telling the library’s new story to the public, and renovating and re-purposing its Empire Street building. “Collaboration and transparency are absolutely key to creating major change. The board and staff worked together as true partners to create a culture of innovation, especially one that is immediately responsive to community needs and that prioritizes co-innovation with community members and partners,” said Jack Martin, executive director.

Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

Award Category: Collaboration

Presented for its work building a community of collaboration among fishermen, scientists, resource managers, and food professionals that promotes sound science, sustainable seafood, and vibrant fishing communities. “Each of these communities speaks its own language, uses its own jargon, and harbors assumptions about others involved in fisheries and seafood. We provided a venue for these groups to come together to find common ground and develop practical solutions to challenges facing fisheries resources, supply chains, and coastal communities,” said Dr. Anna Mercer, executive director.

