



YEAR ONE BRIEF

What Newark Built Together · 2025–2026

A Fund Built With Newark

In Year One, Newark's philanthropic and nonprofit leaders came together to create a new jointly governed fund focused on strengthening nonprofit leadership and organizational capacity.

Newark's nonprofits carry the city — its youth, its housing, its arts, its environment, its families. Philanthropy has long invested in the programs and outcomes Newark nonprofits deliver. The leadership and organizational capacity carrying them is resourced far less consistently. NNLF invests there directly.

NNLF elevates capacity strengthening from supplemental support to intentional philanthropic investment. The Fund was built with Newark's nonprofit sector rather than for it, shaped by executives and philanthropic partners together across 2023–2025. Nonprofit leaders now hold the majority of Governance Committee seats, with authority over strategy, selection, and investment priorities.

Community voice sits inside the decision.

YEAR ONE AT A GLANCE

\$1.7M+	\$285K	\$120K	46	12	24
Committed to Date	Investment in the Board Transformation Community of Practice	Catalytic Implementation Grant Pool	Newark Leaders Engaged	Inaugural Organizations	Paired Leaders

HOW THE FUND INVESTS

NNLF began with a focus on board and staff leadership and was designed to surface and respond to needs the sector identifies rather than to arrive with a program for every area.

WHAT WE INVEST IN

- Board leadership
- Executive leadership
- Succession planning
- Financial sustainability
- Resource development
- Organizational capacity

HOW WE WORK

- Communities of Practice
- Peer learning
- Convenings
- Coaching
- Catalytic capital
- Cross-sector partnerships

WHAT WE SEEK TO STRENGTHEN

- Stronger nonprofit organizations
- Greater organizational resilience
- Stronger leadership
- Shared sector learning
- A stronger Newark nonprofit ecosystem

WE LISTENED BEFORE WE INVESTED

In March 2026, BoardSource facilitated six listening sessions with 46 Newark nonprofit leaders — 28 executive directors and CEOs, and 18 board members.

Governance does not need to be redefined. It needs to be sustained — consistently, collectively, and over time.

- Momentum fades between board meetings.
- Information and expectations are unevenly shared.
- Responsibility rests with too few people.
- Decisions do not consistently become follow-through.

[Read the full BoardSource findings ›](#)

THE FUND RESPONDED

Initiative 01 · Board Transformation Community of Practice

NNLRF's first investment brings together 12 Newark nonprofit organizations and 24 paired leaders — each participating through its executive director or CEO alongside its board chair. The model combines cohort learning, governance assessment, individualized support, action planning, and peer learning. An additional \$120,000 implementation grant pool is available to the cohort, with participating organizations eligible to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 to support implementation of priorities identified through their board action plans.

PARTNERS IN THE WORK

BoardSource

Governance expertise, training, and assessment framework

NPPOC

Cohort facilitation and individualized consulting support

Leadership Newark

Board development training, recruitment and matching

Willow Bees Group

Fund administration, coordination, and implementation

Outcomes will be measured, not asserted.

The inaugural cohort completes its baseline-to-close evaluation at the January 2027 convening. Those findings will refine the first initiative and inform future investment decisions.

WHAT'S NEXT

UNDERWAY

Complete the evidence cycle

Measure the inaugural cohort and refine the model.

IN DEVELOPMENT

Extend learning across the ecosystem

Broader access to learning, connection, and shared practice.

BEING SHAPED

Shape the Fund's next investment

Developed in response to sector priorities — leadership pipeline and succession.

The first year built and launched the vehicle. The next phase generates evidence, deepens the work, and helps determine where NNLRF can be most catalytic.

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