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**RI SPORTS COMMISSION ANNOUNCES GRANTS TO YOUTH SOCCER ORGANIZATIONS**

***Non-Profit Organization to Provide Seed Funding for RI Summer of Soccer Events***

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, March 12, 2026: Jonathan Walker, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Sports Commission, announced that his non-profit organization will be dispersing \$40,000 in seed funding to eight youth soccer organizations throughout the state who will be participating in the *RI Summer of Soccer*.

“Our organization believes in the power of sport to develop discipline, promote teamwork and provide constructive, physical activity for kids in our communities. We are making an investment in these organizations to ensure they have the resources to promote their events and expand participation.”

“The success of international tournaments begins on the fields in our neighborhoods,” he added. “These funds might help provide a mental bridge to the next generation of champions or it might simply help provide an opportunity for some kids to participate, gain a feeling that they belong and that they are a contributor.”

“This seed funding will help us expand opportunities for young people to participate in soccer, grow as leaders, and access scholarships through programs like our tournaments, leadership workshops, and workforce development pathways,” said Tatiana Baena, founder of Mundialito and Central Falls city councilwoman. “For more than a decade, Mundialito has used soccer as a bridge between cultures, creating a platform where youth and families from across Rhode Island’s diverse communities can connect, celebrate their heritage, and build a sense of belonging through the game.”

In total \$40,000 in grants will be distributed. The grantees have submitted applications to Ocean State 26 for events that will transpire in June and July 2026, as part of *the RI Summer of Soccer* umbrella. The RI Sports Commission Legacy Grantees are:

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- Burrillville Gloucester Youth Soccer Association (BGYSA)
- Coventry Soccer Association (CSA)
- Cumberland Youth Soccer Association (CYSA)
- East Providence Youth Soccer Association (EPYSA)
- Mundialito
- Narragansett Youth Soccer Association (NYSA)
- Project GOAL
- South County Youth Soccer Club (SCYSC)

“We at Project GOAL are honored and appreciative of the grant award by the Rhode Island Sports Commission,” said Executive Director Darius Shirzadi. “This contribution will help us provide an exciting summer of soccer-related events to benefit our kids at Project GOAL and our organization’s programming.”

“Having a global soccer event in our backyard this summer happens only once-in-a-lifetime. It creates the perfect time to highlight the importance of soccer in our region,” said Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Executive Director James Toomey. “The beautiful game, and its important history, is imbedded in our local culture. We're excited to host a tournament to showcase the next generation of players and we invite you to the historic Pierce Stadium in East Providence where many greats once played.”

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#### **ABOUT THE RHODE ISLAND SPORTS COMMISSION**

The Rhode Island Sports Commission, [gosportsri.com](http://gosportsri.com), was created to enhance the Rhode Island economy by attracting, promoting, and developing sporting events and related meetings. The non-profit organization serves all 39 cities and towns with first-class sporting events that drive businesses to Rhode Island by satisfying the diverse needs of both competitors and their fans. The Rhode Island Sports Commission is a division of GoProvidence.

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