

# Rhode Island **Innovation** Fellowship



2013 Larger Community Foundations Conference  
January 24, 2013

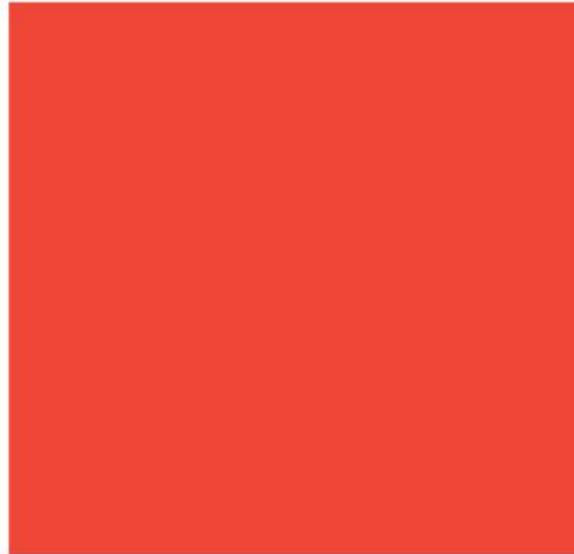
THE  
RHODE ISLAND  
FOUNDATION



John  
Carter

Letitia  
Carter

Reserviert  
Neil Steinberg



**RHODE**  
**ISLAND**  
*INNOVATION*  
**FELLOWSHIP**

For outside-the-box thinking



# Application process

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1-page letter  
of intent

*[Open to all]*

December 23, 2011

Full  
application,  
plus a two  
minute video

*[Semi-finalists]*

February 28, 2012

In-person  
interviews

*[Finalists]*

March 27-28, 2012

Announcement  
Event

*[Open to all]*

April 11, 2012

438



# Finalists

- **Kipp Bradford**

Kipp proposed growing the number of makers (i.e. do-ers and creators) in Rhode Island. He planned to expand current Maker programs, connect the state's 1,000 maker individuals and companies through an online community, and establish a Maker Academy for makers of any skill level.

- **Al Dahlberg**

Al suggested building nine publicly accessible charging stations for plug-in electric vehicles to help propel Rhode Island to the forefront of plug-in electric vehicle adoption on the east coast and establish the state as a leader in green transportation.

- **Julian Dash**

Julian proposed The Clean Energy and Economic Development Fund to accelerate clean energy finance and development in traditionally underserved markets across all of Rhode Island, including low/moderate income families and small businesses.

- **Mary Flynn**

Mary suggested expanding a pilot cooking program in collaboration with the Rhode Island Community Food Bank that provides low-income Rhode Islanders with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare healthy, low-cost meals. She also planned to bring a grocery store to a location in Providence that does not have access to healthy food.

- **Angela Jackson**

Angela's "Global Language Project" would provide foreign language education training programs in Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish to students and teachers in Rhode Island, allowing all students to develop proficiency and be competitive in a globalized world and workforce.

# RI Innovation Fellows

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**Soren Ryherd**



**“The Retail Project”**

**Allan Tear**



**“Bring Together Economic Clusters”**

## Fellow Soren Ryherd

- Soren's winning proposal, **The Retail Project**, aims to establish sustainable brick and mortar retail stores in Rhode Island by first creating them as profitable online businesses.
- The project has the potential to create jobs in retail, distribution, delivery, marketing, and more. Soren projects 39 online stores, two storefronts, and 33 jobs in the next three years, and hundreds of stores over the next 10 to 15 years.

## Fellow Allan Tear

- For his Fellowship, Allan will use new and existing national and local partnerships to “ignite an explosion of new ventures in Rhode Island's unique but under-leveraged economic clusters.”
- Allan will take lessons learned from the emergence of Rhode Island's high tech entrepreneurial community and adapt that knowledge to catalyze similar growth in areas such as art and design, food and beverage, advanced manufacturing, and social impact ventures.
- He has set an ambitious goal to reach a 20 percent increase in the number of high-growth startups in these sectors over three years.

# Announcement Event



**April 11, 2012**

# Group to finance bright ideas to help R.I.

Rhode Island Foundation's Innovation Fellowships will be 'seed capital' to improve life in Ocean State

By PAUL DAVIS  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER  
PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island

But there are plenty of opportunities to make life better, too, the Rhode Island Founda-

three years for ideas that dramatically improve life in the ailing Ocean State.

"We're providing seed capital for ideas," foundation President and CEO Neil D. Steinberg said of the fellowships that are awarded annually. "We want fresh ideas and fresh folks."

Entrepreneurs, go-getters and visionaries can apply for the first Innovation Fellowships beginning Tuesday. The guidelines are on the foundation's website at [www.rifoundation.org/innovation](http://www.rifoundation.org/innovation). The deadline is Dec. 23.

A panel will winnow down  
SEE GRANT, A6

BUSINESS | INNOVATION FELLOWS

## At starting line



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB THAYER

Allan Tear, left, and Soren Ryherd will each receive \$300,000 over three years, funded by philanthropists, to implement their ideas for creating businesses.

## Entrepreneurs win R.I. Foundation grant

By KATE BRAMSON  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — One expects to launch a start-up revolution.  
The other intends to use an unconventional model to fill empty storefronts.  
The Rhode Island Foundation, one of the nation's largest and oldest community foundations, is betting on those two ideas from entrepreneurs Allan Tear and Soren Ryherd. In naming them its inaugural Innovation Fellows, the foundation will give each \$300,000, from a local philanthropic couple, over the next three years to implement their ideas.

Tear and Ryherd each moved to Rhode Island about a decade ago and now help run Providence organizations that employ

### Coming Sunday

Winning ideas Read about seven Rhode Islanders and their ideas for



RHODE ISLAND

turning around Rhode Island's economy; and the benefactor who is supporting the two winners.

Comment on the stories and read poll results in our special online report at [providencejournal.com/reinventrhodeisland](http://providencejournal.com/reinventrhodeisland).

## Making R.I. better, one idea at a time

By KATE BRAMSON  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Ideas for making Rhode Island a better place flooded in when The Rhode Island Foundation announced its Innovation Fellowship last year.

Professors, academics, business professionals, government employees and private citizens applied.

Jessica David, the foundation vice president who designed the fellowship process, thought she'd be thrilled with 50 to 75 ideas — but about 350 arrived in the last two days of the application cycle, bringing the total to 438.

Those ideas focused on energy issues and the environment, food and agriculture, education, economic development, social services and communities. Many wanted to create products — from ergonomic paintbrushes to new solar-energy technology. Others sought to revitalize their neighborhoods and create jobs.

John Mascha, a member of the innovation Fellows selection committee and president of the Rhode Island School of Design, opened his home for interviews with seven finalists.

Allan Tear and Soren Ryherd are the foundation's first Innovation Fellows. Each will receive \$300,000 over the next three years to implement his idea.

The foundation wants to generate more interest in the many ideas. Dozens of innovators who submitted ideas attended the foundation's celebration last Wednesday. Foundation President and CEO Neil D. Steinberg hopes to pull together everyone who submitted ideas so they can network and talk about implementing their visions.

The five finalists have said they continue to work on implementing their big ideas.

Steinberg wants the foundation to help those five attract other funding. And since some of the broader pool of ideas overlapped, he also wants to introduce people who pitched similar ideas.

"Magic things happen when enough smart, creative people get together," he says. "Sometimes it's best to just get out of the way."

### Innovation Fellow

Allan Tear, 41, who lives on the East Side of Providence, expects to create the kind of energy here that the South by Southwest festival has brought to Austin, Texas.  
What began as a festival to celebrate the music, film and technology industries has become the number-one reason Austin is "on the map," says Tear, a founder and name partner of Betaspring, the start-up accelerator in Providence for technology and design entrepreneurs.  
Now an engine for economic activity, that festival is a must on the calendars for all new information-

art and design; food and beverage; advanced manufacturing and social-impact ventures, the businesses and nonprofits that seek to solve societal problems.  
"For 10 years, I've heard people about the potential of Rhode Island," Tear told about 225 people at the Innovation Fellowship celebration on Wednesday. "Ten years from now, I want to be on a plane back from Silicon Valley talking about how Rhode Island is the actual best place to start something."

### Innovation Fellow



Soren Ryherd, 50, who also lives on the East Side of Providence, expects to draw from the lessons he and his wife have learned in the last five years since they launched their local company, Working Planet, which now employs 22.

As they learned how to analyze data to help companies determine which advertising models bring the most profitable business, Ryherd began contemplating why he saw so many empty storefronts. Small retail businesses often fail, he says, because new start-ups can't find enough customers to buy their products fast enough to pay off the steep costs associated with launching the business.

Ryherd's Innovation Fellowship idea is to start companies first as online retailers and help them become profitable. Only then will he locate those stores in empty storefronts throughout Rhode Island.  
Ryherd expects to launch 39 online stores and two storefronts — which will create 33 local jobs — over the next three years. But he expects to have hundreds of stores over the next 10 to 15 years.

Those businesses will start with small ambitions: "It's a lot easier to take five companies each to \$1 million [in revenue] than one to \$5 million."

### Finalist



Kipp Bradford, 38, of Pawtucket, made more Makers to catalyze a new industrial revolution in Rhode Island.  
Makers are people who solve

problems and create new products, services and experiences. They are the people who drive the economy forward.  
"What do you think can be done to turn around Rhode Island's economy? Please send your ideas to John Kotzrwa, Assistant Managing Editor, Business, Commerce & Consumer, Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, R.I. 02902 or by e-mail to [kotzrwa@providencejournal.com](mailto:kotzrwa@providencejournal.com). Include your name, address and contact information. Please keep your submissions shorter than 250 words.

dream up new ideas and they possess the skills to bring such ideas to life.  
Bradford already organizes and hosts events with local Makers that draw dozens and sometimes thousands of people.  
Bradford already organizes and hosts events with local Makers that draw dozens and sometimes thousands of people.

He wants to expand those Maker activities by strengthening partnerships he has formed with local arts, education, business and technology groups.

He wants to build an online community here called "1,000 Garages" to connect local Makers with each other and the nationwide online network called "100,000 Garages."

He hopes to establish a "Maker Academy," an online list of Maker events that helps people determine which are right for them.  
Bradford pegs his Maker start to his childhood days building with Legos, which he eventually left behind when he needed stronger materials — steel, screws and aluminum. "I wanted to build real stuff."

### Finalist



Albert Dahlberg, 42, of Providence, creates an environment to attract 10,000 plug-in electric vehicles to Rhode Island by 2015.  
Do it by creating a network of publicly accessible charging stations that deliver "quick charges" in 30 minutes or less.

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### Innovation Fellowship Selection

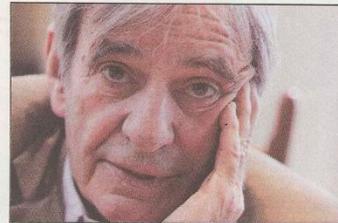
The panel selecting the Innovation Fellows and finalizing their work, exceptional leadership, bold vision, risk potential to "scale up" and statewide impact.  
Chairman Neil D. Steinberg, president and CEO, The Foundation.  
David Dooley, president, University of Rhode Island.  
Ann-Marie Harrington, president and founder, Embi.  
Charlie Kroll, founder and CEO, Andera.  
Marie Langlois, retired managing director, Wauson.

ECONOMY | CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

# Investing in ideas

By PAUL DAVIS  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Carter started the business in 1963 with \$1,000 and sold it in 2000 for \$1 million. But unlike some CEOs, he retired to Florida. (He lives in Providence and has a summer home in Little Compton.)



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / JOHN FREIDMAN

John Carter, industrialist turned philanthropist, is using his fortune to nurture the next generation of Rhode Island entrepreneurs.

lows managed by The Rhode Island Foundation.

The first two recipients — Allan Tear and Soren Ryherd — want to create new companies that will thrive on both the Internet and in empty storefronts.

If their ideas work, they could generate new jobs in a state with one

of the highest unemployment in the nation.

"I think Rhode Islanders are some marvelous things," says the 78-year-old philanthropist who wears his gray hair with a looking part in the middle.

"I just wish to hell I thought 10 years ago."

their families, keeping house afloat."

Project Get Ready Rhode Island in 2009 when a Colorado nonprofit issued a challenge for 20 cities to become leaders on this issue. He convinced that agency to accept his application for Rhode Island to be one of those 20 — not just Providence — because of the state's compact size.

Dahlberg says people gravitate toward electric cars for a number of reasons. Either they're technophiles and fans of new car technology, they're environmentalists or they share the motivation that spurs his commitment: "the compelling case for U.S. energy security."  
"We import about half the oil we use in the United States," Dahlberg says. "And 70 percent of it goes into transportation."

Then, increase their access to healthy, nutritious foods by bringing a grocery store into a Providence neighborhood that doesn't have one, says Flynn, a research dietitian at Miriam Hospital who is also an assistant professor of medicine at Brown University. She might open a new store or convince a local convenience store to alter its model to offer seasonal fruits and vegetables, junk food, more brown rice and so on and other healthy options.

Flynn would expand a research-based cooking program she opened with the Rhode Island County Food Bank. For her "Basic

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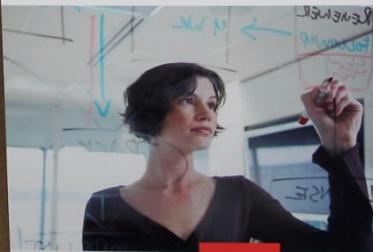
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# Innovation Expo



Made possible through the generosity of Lertina and John Carter and managed by the Rhode Island Foundation, the Rhode Island Innovation Fellowship provides seed funding for Rhode Islanders' big ideas.

Rhode Island Innovation Fellows receive up to \$300,000, for up to three years, to develop, test, and implement their innovative ideas that have the potential to dramatically improve our quality of life in Rhode Island.



**RHODE ISLAND INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP**  
For outside-the-box thinking

[www.rhodeislandfoundation.org/innovation](http://www.rhodeislandfoundation.org/innovation)

**Rhode Island's "Free Lease Program" would foster economic development, bringing small businesses and jobs to our state**

**PROGRAM:**

- Commercial property owners provide a 3-year lease to the non-profit organization.
- State or growing business apply for the lease through the non-profit organization.
- Small businesses and their jobs are encouraged to locate within the cost of the state.

**BENEFITS:**

- State continues to market the program.
- Businesses capital provided to start a business.
- Job creation and economic growth.
- Small businesses and their jobs are encouraged to locate within the cost of the state.

June 21, 2012

# What did we learn?

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- High-end donor stewardship
- The process worked
- Ask, and you shall receive
- Took on a life of its own...
- Connect the dots
- Reconsider our comfort level with risk
- There is a place for different kinds of grants
- Crossover between ideas
- Opened up the RIF
- New platform for additional new initiatives

# RIIF 2013

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- 183 applications received
- 2 new selection committee members
- Progress reports from 2012 fellows and finalists