



Freedom from Violence Initiative Grants

Year 1 Evaluation Summary

Overview

The Women’s Fund Freedom from Violence initiative utilizes a comprehensive approach to improve the community’s response to domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and other related forms of violence. This approach has been put into practice following a unique theory of change that identifies key strategies for improving how the system responds to survivors of violence. The first three of these strategies were prioritized for grant funding in 2019: Strengthen Survivor Leadership, Support Responders and Strengthen Network Collaboration. With the application of these strategies, progress was made toward the intended outcomes of increasing system responsiveness to victims of violence and increasing services and supports for survivor healing.

From July 2018 through June 2019, the Freedom from Violence initiative piloted an innovative funding model to increase services for survivors, responder support and system coordination and collaboration. In partnership with survivors and service providers, the Women’s Fund identified gaps in the system response, notably a deficiency of holistic services for survivors, an absence of support for the well-being of service providers and a lack of collaboration between agencies. To address these challenges embedded in the current system, the Women’s Fund granted nearly \$1 million in funding to eight agencies over a one-year period.

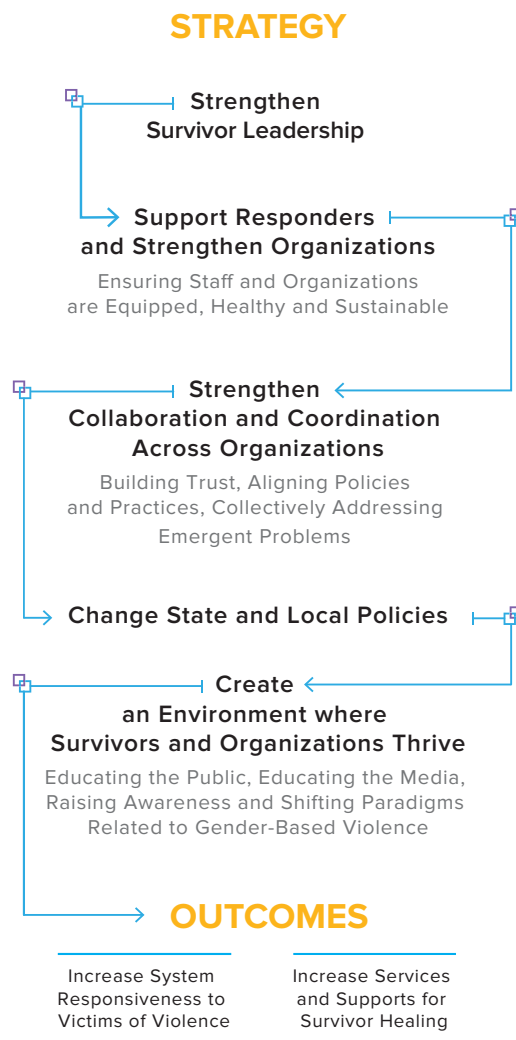
In order to strengthen system resiliency, both grantees and partner organizations were also given the opportunity to engage in a Community of Practice: a collaborative of agencies committed to increasing the capacity and learning of individual employees, their organizations and the network of services as a whole. In this first year, 11 organizations participated in the Community of Practice which included the following elements:

- 1. INDIVIDUAL COACHING –**
Support provided as needed by a trauma-skilled, mindfulness-informed and strengths-based coach.
- 2. CASE CONSULTATION MEETINGS –**
Monthly convenings of direct service staff to receive support, learn from each other and mitigate compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma experiences.
- 3. COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETINGS –**
Tri-annual meetings with direct service and leadership staff to build relationships and learn together.

This evaluation summary describes progress towards implementing these key strategies, intended goals and emergent outcomes:

- Increased Services for Survivors
- Increased Survivor Leadership
- Increased Responder Support
- Increased System Coordination and Collaboration.

Freedom from Violence Theory of Change





Increased Services and Supports for Survivors

Investing in expanded and enhanced services created a more holistic array of supports for survivors, increased survivor choice in services and allowed organizations to reach more survivors.

In total, **895** individuals were reached through outreach and services.

335 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and other related forms of violence received comprehensive services including legal advocacy, intensive wrap-around services, housing and peer support.

342 additional individuals engaged in outreach, receiving information about available resources and community services.

119 youth missing from care engaged in prevention services.

99 family members of survivors supported. The children, parents and loved ones of survivors are also in need of resources, particularly to support family reunification.

5 **NEW PROGRAMS CREATED**, providing new specialized services including holistic, wrap-around support models, survivor-led employment and prevention engagement for youth missing from care.

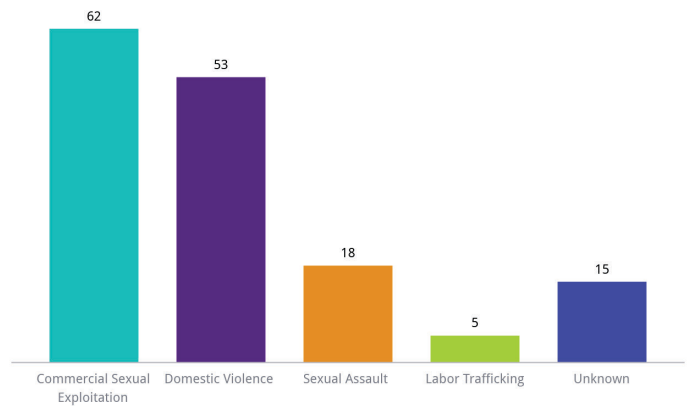
3 **PROGRAMS EXPANDED** existing services to reach more survivors.

Of survivors engaged in services...

- Most identified as a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation (62%) and/or domestic violence (53%).
- By race/ethnicity, survivors most commonly identified as Latinx (42%), white (32%), followed by Black/African American (15%).
- Predominately identified as women (91%).

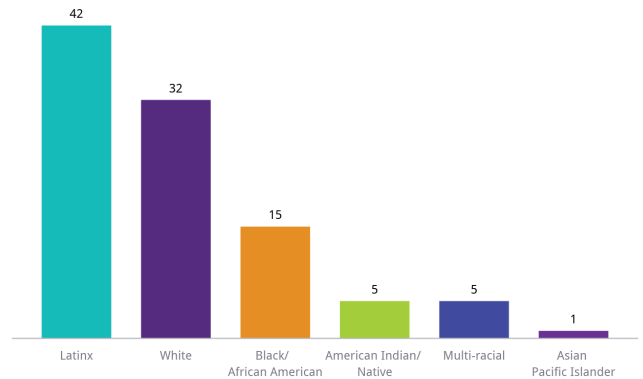
Survivor Lived Experiences

Percentages



Survivors Served, by Race/Ethnicity

Percentages





Increased Survivor Leadership

The Women’s Fund recognizes the expertise survivors bring to this field and champions the value of survivor leadership in designing agency operations, policies and programs. Two of the grant funded organizations are inherently survivor-driven, with survivors leading and implementing all aspects of programming. Additionally, in the past year all organizations reported making advancements in institutionalizing avenues for ongoing survivor leadership development in the following ways:

- Formalized partnerships with survivor-led organizations to exchange trainings and share resources.
- Conducted listening sessions to gather survivor input into program design.
- Initiated efforts to make the legislative process more accessible to survivors.
- Increased paid opportunities for survivors’ expertise and time.
- Increased representation of survivors on teams and inclusion in decision-making meetings.



Increased Responder Support

The Community of Practice provided critical support to front line staff via case consultations, individual coaching and a day-long mindfulness retreat. This support addressed staff burnout and turnover, helping to strengthen the resilience and stability of the service provider system.

These efforts resulted in...

- Increased ability to handle stress and lowered stress levels for direct service staff.
- Increased relationships and learnings with other professionals in the field.
- Adoption of self-care practices that staff could utilize and share with survivors, and enhanced ability to engage with clients in crisis.

Service providers reported that without this specific facilitated time, they would not have any mechanisms for support or reflection. One participant reported that this practice kept them in the field.

“ Our time together kept me from leaving the field altogether. The space was sacred and validating as well as empowering and uplifting. ”

86 hours of **INDIVIDUAL COACHING** provided.

41 unique individuals representing **17 different agencies and independent providers engaged in CASE CONSULTATIONS.**

42 individuals attended **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETINGS.**

As an indicator of stress experienced in the moment, 90% of participants lowered or maintained their respiration rates between the start and end of a single case consultation meeting.



Increased System Collaboration and Coordination

The Community of Practice created the infrastructure for a stronger, more connected network of service providers. Agencies committed to working in partnership to more effectively meet the needs of survivors and provide peer support. In the past year, participating organizations reported the following advancements in collaboration and coordination:

- Increased development and implementation of joint trainings to community audiences and staff.
- Increased referrals based on ability to provide ‘warm hand-offs’ and directly connect to providers across agencies.
- Increased collaboration through the provision of services on-site across agencies based on the specific niche of each organization.

“ We have committed to better collaborative case management when clients are accessing services from other project partners, in order to build better support systems for clients and at the same time, minimize duplication of case management procedures. ”

47 **TRAININGS** provided, engaged over 2,100 people.



Emergent Outcomes

Through a large-group Ripple Effect Mapping process, grantees and community partners identified five broad areas of emergent outcomes that were accomplished in the first year:

| Emergent Outcomes | Examples |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Strengthened Survivor Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations listened to and utilized survivor voice to inform program design Sought funding to compensate survivor leadership |
| Increased Community Awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community participation as demonstrated through attendance at trainings and events Increased awareness of unique populations, such as youth missing from care |
| Policy and Legislation Action Taken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in informing policy changes and legislation |
| Demonstrated Investment in Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced and appreciated safe spaces for vulnerability Reported feeling validated and supported |
| Expanded Networks and Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created new partnerships Established collective values: trauma-informed, empathy, non-judgment Shared expertise and knowledge across network Increased awareness of local resources and cross-network referrals |
| New/Expanded Services and Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created more options for survivors Increased outreach and resources for youth Increased specialization of programming to fit unique service needs |

What Next?

The Women’s Fund investment in the Freedom from Violence initiative is uniquely:

- **VALUE-DRIVEN** – Consistently prioritizing survivor-voice, collaboration and equity.
- **INNOVATIVE** – Emphasizing service provider support and investing in the well-being of direct service staff and organizational leadership.
- **INTERSECTIONAL** – Recognizing the intersections of domestic violence, sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation, and investing in such a way as to break down silos and uphold multiple experiences.

The Women’s Fund investment provided the opportunity for organizations to both pilot innovative strategies and enhance their current practices. Building capacity and infrastructure while responding to survivor needs and feedback helped establish new and improved practices. Going forward, the Freedom from Violence initiative will build upon successes and lessons learned with a particular focus on the following three drivers of change:

1. **INCREASING SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP –**
There is a critical need to strengthen mechanisms for sustainable and consistent survivor leadership so as to center survivor voices as defined by each survivor.
2. **PROMOTING EQUITY AND INCLUSION –**
Data indicates that the survivors receiving services are not reflective of those who experience violence most in the community, with Black and Native survivors being particularly underrepresented. In this next year, the Women’s Fund is investing in equity with all partner organizations to ensure that they are equipped to address inequities within their organizations and better serve survivors of color. Through these efforts, we seek to increase the number of survivors engaged who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color, transgender or gender expansive.
3. **EXPANDING NETWORK COLLABORATION BY ENGAGING ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP –**
The Women’s Fund recognizes a need to engage organizational leadership to ensure that guiding principles are infused throughout each partner organization. Areas for expansion include engaging organizational leadership in monthly Leadership Case Consultations and biannual Community of Practice gatherings with executive directors to create opportunities for leadership to support collaboration and authentic sharing across the network of service providers.