



JUNE 2025

# Funding with Trust

A DATA-DRIVEN  
APPROACH TO SUPPORTING A  
SURVIVOR-LED MOVEMENT



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# Content Warning

Please be advised that this resource contains mentions of gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, sexual assault, economic abuse, trauma, burnout, and other related themes.

Please take care of yourself in whatever way that is comfortable to you as you're reading this resource, such as pausing to reflect and write what you're feeling, taking a break from reading, doing breathing exercises with your eyes closed, etc.

# Introduction



This guide is an invitation to imagine—and invest in—a movement against gender-based violence (GBV) that is survivor-led, sustainable, and thriving.

In 2022, FreeFrom distributed Safety Fund grants to survivors working within the movement and asked them to share their experiences through an optional survey. These survivors are not only healing from harm—they are leading frontline efforts to support other survivors. Their dual perspective gives them unparalleled insight into what the movement needs to be effective, equitable, and healing for everyone involved.

What we heard from them is clear: the current systems in place often replicate the very harms they seek to address. But we also heard something else—something powerful, something audacious. We heard vision. Survivors working in the movement shared bold ideas for how we can transform this field into one that truly supports their well-being, healing, and long-term leadership.

This guide distills those visions into a set of recommendations for funders. It is a resource toward a movement where survivors who lead this work are resourced, respected, and recognized. **A movement where funding reflects the urgency of healing and justice.** A movement built not only to respond to harm but to prevent it, and to support long-term abundance and safety.

If funders act on what survivors have shared with us, these possibilities are within reach. The recommendations in this guide are not hypothetical—they are grounded in lived experience, in frontline expertise, and in a deep love for this work. They are a blueprint for what's possible.

Let's build that  
future—together.



# Who is This Guide For?

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This guide is for **decision-makers at giving institutions** who are ready to grow their impact and help transform the ecosystem of support for survivors. You have a powerful opportunity: to align your funding with the wisdom, needs, and vision of those most impacted by gender-based violence. By following the recommendations in this guide, you can help build a survivor-led movement that is resourced, resilient, and innovative.

The insights here come from survivor service providers who reported that, on average, **58.9% of funding for their agencies came from the government**. That means these recommendations are **especially relevant to public/government funders**—whose restrictive requirements can often stifle innovation and responsiveness. **But private philanthropy has an equally critical role to play, especially now.**

In 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, private funders showed what was possible by rapidly deploying flexible resources to meet urgent needs. Today, as federal programs face cuts, rollbacks of critical protections, and an increasingly challenging policy environment, survivors and service providers are experiencing devastating setbacks. This moment calls for urgency and bold action: private philanthropy can—and must—step up again, matching or exceeding that earlier generosity.

## Who is This Guide For? (cont.)

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As private funders consider increasing their investments, we ask that they also embrace the recommendations in this guide:

- **Provide Flexible and Long-Term Funding**
- **Evaluate and Simplify Reporting Processes**
- **Broaden Your Understanding of Who Survivors Are and When They Need Support**
- **Champion Organizational Well-Being for Your Grantees**
- **Encourage and Fund Unrestricted Cash Programs**

At the same time, we know that many people working in this space—especially program officers and others on the front lines of grantmaking—are doing their best to advocate for more just and flexible funding, often within rigid systems. If that's you, we hope this guide affirms what you've seen in your work with grantee organizations and resonates with what you may know from your own lived experience, whether as a survivor or as someone in community with survivors.

This guide is also **for service providers and advocates working in the movement**—especially those who are survivors themselves. To every survivor service provider who contributed their time, energy, and vision to develop the report that informed this guide: thank you. Your insights, honesty, and clarity shaped every part of this resource. We hope this guide reflects your leadership and becomes a tool you can use to spark conversations, advocate for change, and feel recognized for the vital role you play.

And finally, this guide is **for all survivors and allies**—whether or not you're connected to the movement or a specific organization. We hope you feel seen in these recommendations, and that the vision reflected here resonates with your experiences and hopes. This movement belongs to you, too.

# Building an Abundant and Sustainable Movement

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The biggest dream I have at my agency is to one day be able to offer unrestricted cash grants. So many survivors have a variety of needs, like paying for rent, bills, gas, food, clothing, school, car repairs, legal services, etc. All survivors deserve the freedom to spend their money how they need, rather than being given a gift card or having to have something paid directly to the other party (ex: paying the mechanic directly for car repairs). This alone would make a difference in the life of almost every survivor I work with.

Survivors envision a movement that fully embraces holistic well-being—a movement that not only acknowledges the layered complexities of survival, but also actively supports them with robust, comprehensive services. At the forefront of this vision is the provision of financial support to survivors: 400 responses from service providers highlighted their survivor clients' need for direct financial assistance, encompassing everything from unrestricted, flexible long-term aid to targeted help with specific costs and even a basic universal income.<sup>1</sup> Complementing this, survivors called for broader financial services—including financial literacy programs (66.7%), credit rebuilding (62.5%), and savings support (58.5%)—to secure long-term financial stability. These services, according to survivors, are not just about economic security; they are about reclaiming their autonomy and building lives of dignity and possibility.

66.7% called for financial literacy programs

62.5% called for credit rebuilding

58.5% called for savings support

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all the data in this guide is drawn from FreeFrom. *Envisioning an Abundant Movement: Experiences and Recommendations from Survivors Working in the Movement*. Lead authors: Pamela Guerra, Sarah Lawrence, Julia Uyttewaal, and Tannia Ventura. June 25, 2025. <http://www.freefrom.org/eam/experiences-and-recommendations>. When referencing “survivors” or “service providers” and their experiences, reflections, and recommendations throughout this guide, we mean the survivor service providers we reached through FreeFrom’s 2022 Safety Fund survey.



# Building an Abundant and Sustainable Movement (cont.)

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Alongside financial empowerment, survivors shared a transformative vision for support services that spans every facet of daily life. Over 200 responses emphasized the need for safe, permanent, and affordable housing—critical not just as a physical space, but as a foundation for healing and community. Moreover, over 300 voices shared that the movement must provide robust well-being support, including mental health services, holistic and survivor-centered care, and accessible medical services. Additional dream services for survivors, such as expanded employment and education opportunities, childcare support, legal services, and community-based peer programs, round out a comprehensive vision for a movement that is responsive to every need. Survivors dream of a future where every resource—from economic stability to emotional and physical well-being—is within reach, fostering a community where all survivors can thrive and lead the charge for lasting change.



**Cash plays a huge role in survivor safety and well-being.  
Survivors need flexible financial assistance to heal and thrive.**

To truly honor survivor-informed values, and to make this vision possible, the movement is encouraging funders to shift the existing funding framework in ways that recognize and trust the expertise of both survivors and service providers. This means explicitly trusting survivors—whose lived experiences are invaluable—in determining their own needs and priorities, and supporting providers who have dedicated their work to this mission. By centering their voices, funders can create financial mechanisms that are better aligned with the unique challenges and strengths found within the community.

# Building an Abundant and Sustainable Movement (cont.)

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In addition, funders should actively include survivors in decision-making processes, ensuring that those impacted by funding choices have a seat at every table. Leading by example is essential; funders are urged to advocate for these changes among their peers and to be vocal and public about their commitment to survivor-informed practices. By modeling this necessary inclusion of survivor voices, funders will be doing their part to build a more just and responsive movement for all survivors.



**Most of our clients have been controlled their entire lives and they come to us to be free so we shouldn't be restrictive and confining with funding for services. Let the clients tell you what they need and then provide that based on the funding available.**



# Recommendation 1:

## Invest More in the Movement

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There is an urgent call for a substantial increase in funding to meet the growing and complex needs of survivors. **At a time when the movement to end GBV is under political threat—especially at the federal level—there is a critical opportunity for funders to lead with courage, clarity, and alignment with survivor-informed values.** By stepping up to invest more, funders can help sustain and expand the movement at a moment when it is needed most.

As you increase the amount of funding you provide, we encourage you to do so in alignment with the rest of the recommendations in this guide. Survivors and survivor service providers are clear: how funding is structured matters just as much as how much is given. Centering flexibility, trust, and survivor leadership in your approach will ensure that increased funding is not only impactful but also transformative for the movement.

In listening to survivor service providers, several consistently underfunded areas emerged. While these areas can serve as useful starting points for investment, they are not intended to become new funding silos. Instead, they illustrate some of the ways unrestricted funds can be used to support holistic, survivor-led solutions:



**Safe Housing and Transportation:** Enhance access to stable living conditions and reliable transit options.



**Direct Financial Relief:** Increase cash assistance to relieve immediate financial pressures.



**Essential Services:** Expand resources for basic needs, legal assistance, medical care, and healthcare services.



**Family Support:** Invest in childcare, educational opportunities, and debt relief to foster long-term stability.

# Recommendation 1:

## Invest More in the Movement

(cont.)

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By significantly increasing their giving—and doing so in a way that maximizes flexibility—funders can help create a more robust, responsive, and inclusive ecosystem. Survivors are clear on what's needed. The opportunity now is for funders to meet this moment by resourcing the movement boldly, sustainably, and in deep partnership with those most impacted.

### What survivors are saying:



Our housing funds only cover rent and not mortgages. This does not support survivors building wealth and maintaining long-term housing.

One way I often see is that funding sources refuse to pay for utilities for survivors, so any financial help they may receive can't go towards bills for basic necessities of electric, gas, water, but only towards housing costs of rent.

Many of our clients need car repairs and we are simply unable to fund such large expenses despite transportation being one of the largest barriers many of our survivors face.

I deal with this every single day. My funding does not cover household items or furniture. Survivors will move into new housing with a backpack and the clothes on their back and nothing else. I have had survivors tell me that they are sleeping on piles of clothes or towels on the floor because they have no money and I'm not even allowed to buy an air mattress.

## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions

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Survivor service providers have shared that flexible funding is not merely a budgetary preference—it is a foundational investment in organizational health and longevity. By offering unrestricted funds, funders enable organizations to confidently support survivor staff, ensure necessary administrative functions, and maintain stability in times of rapid change. This financial flexibility directly contributes to a healthier, more sustainable organizational structure.

Moreover, such funding creates the space for organizations to pivot and innovate as survivors' needs evolve. It replicates the trusting and abundant relationships that the movement aspires to build, fostering an environment where every team member feels secure and empowered. **In essence, flexible funds are a critical lever for ensuring that survivor-driven initiatives can continuously adapt, innovate, and thrive in support of a transformative vision for the future.**

**The most effective unrestricted grants meet the following qualities, placing full trust in organizations to lead their work and respond to the evolving needs of the survivors they serve.** Even if your institution is not yet in a position to move all funding to general operating grants, following these guidelines is a meaningful step you can take right now.



## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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**Eliminate eligibility barriers** that exclude some survivors from receiving support. These barriers often impact survivors who are not in immediate crisis, those who are in certain locations or not part of certain programs, those who haven't left or choose not to leave an abusive relationship, and those who may be going through financial abuse but whose income appears to be above a specific income restriction. Other barriers exclude undocumented survivors, survivors who have been criminalized, or anyone who doesn't fit narrow or stereotypical ideas of what a survivor "should" look like.



People with criminal histories do not stand a chance getting ahead. Not enough jobs, housing benefits not available to felons etc. Especially people falsely charged with DV after defending themselves from years of abuse.

**Remove limitations on covered expenses**, like banning spending on phones, bill payments, or debt—items that are often essential to safety and recovery.

I had a survivor who had her phone stolen during her assault and wasn't sure how she could get another. I asked if we could get her a cheap prepaid phone and was told no. I would have been able to get a one night hotel stay, a train ticket nearly anywhere in the country, and Ubers for her to go from hospital to hotel to station, easily totaling over \$300. But I couldn't get her a \$100 prepaid phone to make her feel safe.

## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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**Remove restrictions on payment methods**, like only allowing payments to landlords or vendors instead of directly to survivors.



[I am] currently working on a case where a survivor needs funding for some past due bills but the funding requirement only allows a check to be made to a specific store rather than just making it out to her so she can pay the bills she needs to pay.

**Remove unnecessary documentation requirements** that force survivors to relive trauma or produce paperwork that may not be safe for them to obtain (e.g., police reports).

We work with many survivors who aren't able to get victim compensation because our state requires police reports, which many survivors don't want to get.

**Eliminate time-related restrictions**, like only funding support within a certain window of crisis, or once per year—even though violence and recovery aren't confined to a timeline.

One of our major current state/federal funders requires that we only provide financial assistance to each survivor once per 12 months (i.e., relocating, move-in costs like first month's rent and security deposit). We have had situations where the survivor had to move twice within the same year due to their ex stalking and tracking her down, and we were not able to provide them the financial assistance they would have benefited from.

## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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**Evaluate and simplify reporting practices to center trust and autonomy.** Many funders require extensive paperwork—long applications, detailed due diligence reports, rigid reporting frameworks, and unanticipated information requests with short turnaround times—that take significant time away from program delivery. A more trust-based approach mirrors the purpose of unrestricted funding: giving organizations the autonomy to lead. Effective models include flexible check-ins in place of lengthy reports, short administrative forms instead of long grant applications, and letting organizations choose how to measure and share progress and impact. Streamlining these practices helps reduce administrative burden, encourages program flexibility, and makes space for organizations to pivot in response to survivors' evolving needs.



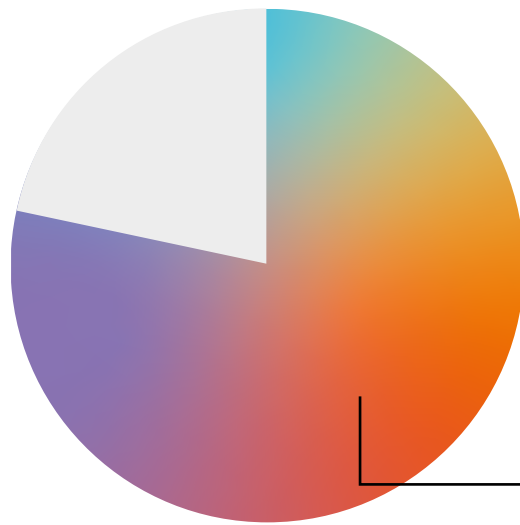
**Understand that changing reporting guidelines on us mid-cycle takes us away from the important work of serving survivors.**

**Restrictive, inflexible, short-term funding and heavy reporting requirements literally take money and services out of the hands of survivors.**

## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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Flexible funds are directly linked to survivors' financial security. Survivor service providers emphasized how funders can directly help build financial security for survivors:



# 78.4%

of survivor service providers said that funders should provide **more flexible grants to use as needed (also known as general operating funds)** to better support the work they are doing with survivors around finances



**More flexible grants to use as needed is the #1 recommendation for funders**

## Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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74.2%

of survivor service providers said that having more flexible funding and/or a larger percentage of the budget allocated towards **general operating** costs would be very impactful on their organization's ability to **effectively support the financial security of survivors**

59.5%

of survivor service providers said that funders should offer more flexibility to **change program objectives, outcomes, and plans** to better support the work they are doing with survivors around finances

47.4%

of survivor service providers said that they can think of a time when **funding restrictions or requirements got in the way of getting a survivor something they needed**



# Recommendation 2: Prioritize Flexible Funding and Remove Restrictions (cont.)

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## What survivors are saying:



Believe and trust survivors. Let us lead. Fund us with no strings attached. Otherwise it's charity and not solidarity.

Agencies and staff know best how they can and should use the money. Every place is different and has vastly different needs and priorities, so restrictive, blanket rules aren't helpful.

Flexibility is so important. Trust programs to know what the agency and survivors need and to be good stewards of the funds to best meet those needs.

Needs change, and the changes we make to our programs are a direct result of what the community is telling us they need. I think if more funders understood this and were more trusting and flexible, it'd be easier to fund this work.



## Recommendation 3: Provide Long-Term Funding

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Long-term funding is a critical investment that not only secures the well-being of survivor staff but also underpins the strategic and innovative growth of organizations. By ensuring multi-year support, funders help pave the way for sustainable operational planning, scaling, and an enduring movement.

### Key benefits include:



**Support for Survivor Staff:** Stable funding enables fair compensation, benefits, and retention of experienced survivor leaders.



**Organizational Longevity:** Long-term funds allow for reliable planning and investment in infrastructure and capacity-building.



**Innovation and Scaling:** Predictable resources foster an environment where creative solutions can be developed and scaled, ensuring adaptive responses to evolving needs.



**Movement Sustainability:** Secure long-term investments strengthen the overall movement, building a resilient and transformative system for change.

This approach ensures that every dollar invested today contributes to a stronger, more innovative, and sustainable future for the entire movement.

### What survivors are saying:



Provide funding over the **LONG** term. A 1 year grant honestly does not go far. Caring about community involves caring consistently. Offer funding, especially housing/financial support, to last **YEARS**.

# 66.0%

of survivor service providers said that funders should offer **long-term grants** of 1+ years to better **support the work they are doing with survivors around finances**

## Recommendation 4: Broaden Your Understanding of Who Survivors Are and When and How They Need Support

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To meet the moment, funders must expand their understanding of survivorship—who survivors are, the types of harm they experience, when they need support, and the many ways they choose to survive and thrive.

Survivors are not a monolith. Narrow definitions and eligibility requirements exclude entire communities and create barriers for those who are already navigating violence and harm.

We encourage funders to broaden their lens in the following key areas:



**Types of Harm:** Survivors are subjected to many forms of violence—including gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, familial violence, state violence, institutional harm, and economic abuse. All are valid and deserving of support.



**Timing of Support:** Survivors need support long before and long after a moment of crisis. Healing is non-linear, and funding must reflect the long-term nature of both harm and recovery.



**Who Survivors Are:** Survivors can be of any income level, race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, disability status, and background.



**How Survivors Survive:** Survivors heal and rebuild in many ways. They may not always identify with mainstream narratives of victimhood—and yet their strategies and choices deserve to be honored, trusted, and resourced.

## Recommendation 4: Broaden Your Understanding of Who Survivors Are and When and How They Need Support (cont.)

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When funders fail to reflect this full spectrum of survivorship, the consequences are devastating—not only for survivors, but for the advocates and organizations trying to support them:



Most of our grants do not support familial violence. There are people that are struggling to live a life free of violence and are being harmed by a family member. When they have the strength to call, I have to inform them they do not qualify. That is heartbreaking and awful—it contributes to my burnout.

If a client is only a domestic violence survivor, I cannot accept them because the grant that pays my salary is only for sexual assault survivors.

Some funds are only available to U.S. citizens or permanent residents; sometimes you need a social security number, being able to demonstrate that a client won't have a similar financial need the next month, having to provide documentation with the survivor's name on the lease when it was under the abuser's name, only being able to access the funding once per year.

[There are times where a] survivor's victimization was not "recent" enough to qualify for financial assistance, or [the] main focus [is] only . . . on getting survivors out of immediate danger but not the aftermath of leaving an abusive relationship and the long-term support needed to rebuild.

## Recommendation 4: Broaden Your Understanding of Who Survivors Are and When and How They Need Support (cont.)

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**We urge funders to:**



**Remove rigid eligibility criteria** that exclude undocumented survivors, disabled survivors, incarcerated survivors, and others whose experiences don't fit traditional molds.



**Support long-term safety and healing**—not just emergency response.



**Fund organizations led by survivors** and those closest to the work, and trust that they know what their communities need.



## Recommendation 5: Champion and Support Organizational Well-Being as Movement Building

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A survivor-led movement cannot thrive if the organizations doing the work are stretched thin, under-resourced, and forced to choose between sustainability and survival.

While funders may not directly set salaries or benefits at the organizations they support, they hold tremendous influence. Too often, organizations feel pressure—real or perceived—to minimize investments in staff wages and organizational well-being in order to appear funder-friendly. This results in burnout, turnover, and the erosion of survivor leadership from the very work it should be leading.

We invite funders to step into a leadership role by proactively advocating for and supporting organizations in investing in their teams with confidence. This means explicitly encouraging the inclusion of living wages, comprehensive benefits, and internal sustainability as valid and necessary uses of funding. You can help break a cycle of scarcity and fear by normalizing what the movement has long been asking for.

## Recommendation 5: Champion and Support Organizational Well-Being as Movement Building (cont.)

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### Key areas of investment include:

**Living Wages:** Support grantee organizations in building budgets that provide a fair, living wage to all staff—especially those with lived experience. Without financial security, survivors working in the field are at risk of further harm, including re-entrapment in abusive situations.



I need a living wage. I support my family on my own because I didn't want to be demeaned, entrapped, or beaten by my husband. I don't want my children to live in constant poverty because their mom works 60 hours a week to help other survivors but we might have our water turned off this week because I had to pay our mortgage.

Don't allow organizations to submit grant applications with salaries lower than the living wage. . . . Require organizations to build in adequate salaries for staff.

I can't keep working in the field if I don't get the pay I need to support other survivors. I can't do my job well when stressed about my own finances. It also raises my risk for getting into another abusive relationship because I'm financially desperate.

## Recommendation 5: Champion and Support Organizational Well-Being as Movement Building (cont.)

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**Full Staffing:** Ensure organizations have the resources to fully staff their teams and reduce burnout. Survivors doing this work are often holding trauma—both their own and others'. Understaffing intensifies harm.



I'd like funders to know that it is challenging to pour out of an empty cup. We need support, a living wage, and high turnover rates isn't just a phase. It's a reflection of the poor living wages and as much as we love to be of service we also need to provide for our own families.

**Enhanced Benefits:** Encourage funding that covers mental health care, vision, dental, paid time off, survivor paid leave, and other essentials for long-term well-being. These are not luxuries—they are the conditions that allow survivors to stay in this work sustainably.

We need money, health insurance (with fully covered mental health, vision, dental), and PTO to bring our wisdom and knowledge into the work in a sustainable way. We can't keep hemorrhaging folks with lived experience, wisdom, and talent from this work. It isn't just individual people's lack of fortitude that leads to burnout, it's the systemic flaws (primarily disproportionate and under resourcing) that funders have the power to address.

## Recommendation 5: Champion and Support Organizational Well-Being as Movement Building (cont.)

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**Organizational Well-being and Resilience:** Encourage and support grantee organizations to build financial reserves, pursue strategic planning, and invest in long-term infrastructure that ensures their health and sustainability. Too often, grantee organizations—especially those led by and for survivors—are asked to operate in crisis mode while delivering crisis support. A well-resourced organization is a more effective one.



Survivors are the leaders in the GBV movement. To create strong, thriving, joyful, and well communities we also must support the survivors providing the services. Working in the GBV movement without adequate wages, benefits, and rest increases and exacerbates trauma. We can support our communities best when we're supported.

## Recommendation 5: Champion and Support Organizational Well-Being as Movement Building (cont.)

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This strategy not only honors the value of survivor expertise but also builds a sustainable framework for a resilient and thriving movement. Survivor service providers shared how this foundation would **directly support the work they do with their clients around financial security**:

**68.5%** said funders should **increase their understanding around providing living wages** for staff

**62.6%** said funders should allow **funds to cover more costs related to staff needs**

**47.6%** said funders should allow funds to go toward **building the organization's savings**

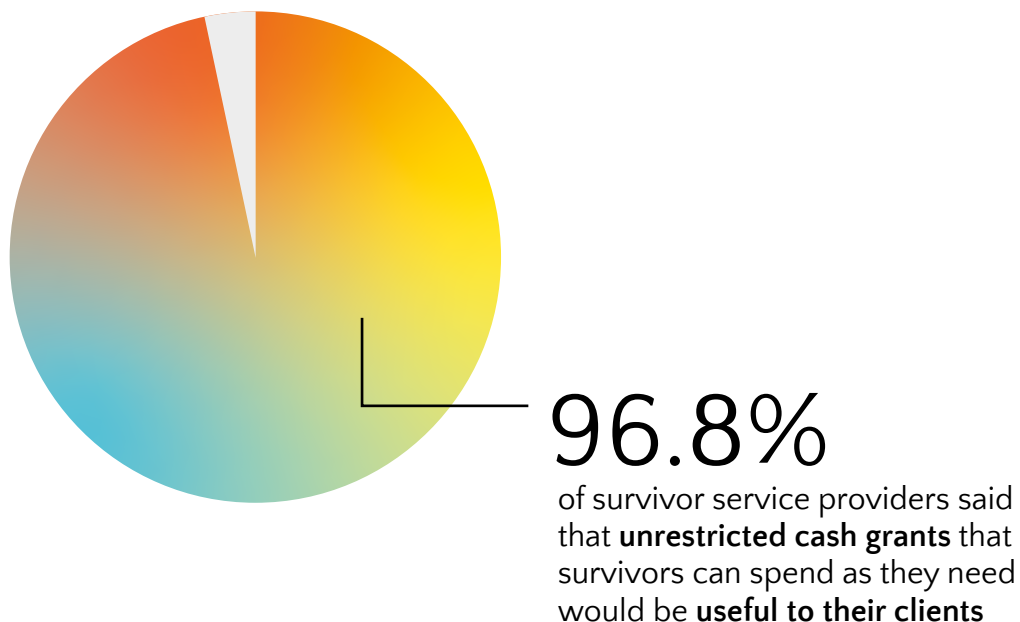


## Recommendation 6: Encourage and Fund Unrestricted Cash Programs

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Unrestricted cash programs offer survivors direct, flexible support that addresses both immediate needs and longer-term stability. Survivors and survivor service providers are aligned in naming this as a top priority: **96.8% of survivor service providers said unrestricted cash grants that survivors can spend as they need would be useful to their clients. Likewise, survivors have consistently identified cash to spend as they see fit as their top need in our previous research.**<sup>2</sup>

This underscores the critical role of unrestricted cash in meeting survivors' diverse and evolving needs. Beyond meeting material needs, unrestricted cash support restores a sense of autonomy and control, allowing survivors to make choices that reflect their own priorities, safety, and healing—on their own terms.



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<sup>2</sup> FreeFrom, *Support Every Survivor: How Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Disability Shape Survivors' Experiences and Needs*, August 17, 2022, <https://www.freefrom.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Support-Every-Survivor-PDF.pdf>.

# Recommendation 6:

## Encourage and Fund

## Unrestricted Cash Programs

(cont.)

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Supporting unrestricted cash programs supports the long-term safety of survivors through various key aspects.

**Immediate Relief:** Provide survivors with direct financial resources to manage urgent expenses, which can be broadly different from one survivor to the next, and reduce daily stress.



The biggest dream I have at my agency is to one day be able to offer unrestricted cash grants. So many survivors have a variety of needs, like paying for rent, bills, gas, food, clothing, school, car repairs, legal services, etc. All survivors deserve the freedom to spend their money how they need, rather than being given a gift card or having to have something paid directly to the other party (ex: paying the mechanic directly for car repairs). This alone would make a difference in the life of almost every survivor I work with.

There is no way to perfectly guess what survivors may need – the grants often restrict what staff can do what, even when we may be able to help/support each other better. It's frustrating and often feels very counterproductive.

Poverty and the ability to feed dependents is the number one reason I encounter as to why clients cannot leave their abuser. To leave a bread-winning abuser that oftentimes forced the victim to stay home or not build any sort of wealth or savings, would be probably just as deadly as staying with the abuser and just surviving. To leave is to be in financial ruin without the right skills, assets, or fall-back savings to support themselves and their children. Having unrestricted funds can make a world of difference in assisting clients to reach freedom from an abuser.

# Recommendation 6: Encourage and Fund Unrestricted Cash Programs (cont.)

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**Autonomy and Dignity:** Allow survivors to determine how best to allocate funds according to their unique needs.



It might seem sensible to allocate funds for specific use, but often survivor needs vary so widely that funds might be best suited for groceries one week, then for dental work the following week. Violence affects every part of a person's life, and survivor needs cannot be relegated to what funding bodies might think they need. Fewer restrictions on how funding [is] used would enable survivors to identify their own needs and direct their support in a way that can return autonomy. Increased self-direction with funding supports survivors as whole people. Despite good intentions, funding restrictions can be paternalistic and assume that survivor needs are only valid when categorized under key deliverables.

Most of our clients have been controlled their entire lives and they come to us to be free so we shouldn't be restrictive and confining with funding for services. Let the clients tell you what they need and then provide that based on the funding available.

**Streamlined Processes:** Minimize eligibility hurdles and administrative tasks that can delay support.

More money for staff and more money for survivors without limitations. We can give people cash without having to track everything they do.

# Conclusion

Building a stronger, more sustainable future will take funders showing up boldly, abundantly, and in alignment with the values and vision of survivors. This is not a distant goal—it's an urgent opportunity to take meaningful action in this moment. As the movement against gender-based violence faces widespread funding cuts, the rollback of protections, and growing threats, the need for courageous, survivor-informed funding has never been more urgent.

This guide offers a path forward. These recommendations—from providing flexible, long-term resources to supporting organizational well-being and unrestricted cash assistance—are not just thoughtful strategies. They are the building blocks of a movement that can weather the challenges ahead, respond to evolving needs, and imagine something more effective and survivor-centered.

Funders have a powerful role to play. Whether you're shaping public funding policy or leading within a private funding institution, you have the chance to meet this moment with clarity and conviction. When you trust survivors, follow their lead, and create space for organizations to respond freely and creatively to their communities' needs, you help unlock the full potential of this movement.

A commitment to these principles is an investment in justice, in healing, and in a future where all survivors can thrive. The time to act is now. Survivors are leading the way. Let's follow their vision—and fund it fully.

# Acknowledgements

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# Thank You

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## Funding with Trust:

A Data-Driven Approach to Supporting a Survivor-led Movement

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