

Quick Guide: Strategies for Sustainable Funding

ARCvi Domain: Finding and Sustaining Funding

Purpose: This ARCvi Quick Guide was designed to help community violence intervention (CVI) organizations think about strategies and practices that diversify funding, strengthen financial stability, and support long-term sustainability. Sustaining your CVI program requires having clear short-term and long-term visions, different strategies for funding sources, and being cautious of extracting funding practices that may cause more harm to your CVI efforts.

Diversify Funding

Build a funding strategy that diversifies your income sources so you never have to depend on a single funder who might pressure you to drift from your mission. Unrestricted revenue, community giving, and mutual aid sources of support are mission protectors. The most dangerous position for any organization is dependence on a single funder because they change priorities, cut funding, or close.

Build a Portfolio of Different Sources:

- Government funding: Largest amounts, most restrictions. It can be an anchor but don't let it be your only source.
- Foundation funding: Relationship-based. It's more flexible. Build long-term relationships, not transactional ones.
- Community giving / individual donors: Typically, unrestricted. Builds ownership. It's often overlooked by CBOs.
- Earned income: Some organizations develop and provide training, consulting, or other services that others pay for. It's worth exploring.
- Mutual aid and peer solidarity: Not a traditional funding source, a survival practice and a values practice.

Care-Centered Budget Model

Every organization should move toward a budget that accounts for the many essential components and needs of your organization, program participants, and community. For key elements of a care-centered budget, see our Quick Guide: [Building a Care-Centered Budget for CVI Work](#).

The Long Game: 2–3 Year Vision

Have a clear long-term vision for your organization and how it may fit into the broader CVI ecosystem in your city. For instance, a long-term vision for Philadelphia's CVI ecosystem includes:

- A coordinated state-grassroots funding pipeline that actually reaches community organizations.
- Sustainable, living wage staffing for credible messengers and peer workers.
- Youth and survivor leadership embedded in funding structures and decision-making.
- Reduced burnout across the field through care-centered organizational practices.
- Multi-year grants as the standard, not the exception.
- A community recognized as the expert in its own safety and resourced accordingly.

Funders should be able to see that your organization is planning for the long term, not just the next grant. Whenever possible, communicate a staged vision for growth—what your program is building now, what it hopes to strengthen next, and what longer-term sustainability could look like. This signals that you are thinking strategically about staffing, infrastructure, partnerships, and impact over time, and helps position current funding as part of a thoughtful, larger trajectory rather than a one-time request.

Push Back Against Restrictive Funding Practices

Navigating the nonprofit funding system can be difficult, especially for organizations doing intensive community-based work with limited administrative capacity. It has been well documented that some funding relationships can limit innovation or community-rooted change when organizations become overly dependent on funders whose priorities do not align with their own mission and values.

Some Ways to Push Back:

- Ask for upfront payments instead of reimbursement. It's a reasonable request.
- Negotiate for multi-year funding wherever possible.
- Ask for indirect/overhead rates that cover your costs (15–25%).
- Join coalitions that advocate collectively for better funding structures.
- Share funding intelligence with peer organizations. We are all in this together.

We thank Tobi Downing, Director of Philadelphia Gun Violence Reduction Initiatives, of the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General for providing much of the content herein.

[ARCvi.org](https://arcvi.org) is an initiative of the [Public Policy Lab](https://publicpolicylab.org) in Temple University's College of Liberal Arts. The website was designed to deliver curated resources and tools to community-centered programs focused on reducing community violence. This effort has been supported in part by the Stoneleigh Foundation and the Green Family Foundation.