



Actionable Resources
for Change in
Violence Intervention



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Lab

Quick Guide: How do I create a care-centered grant budget for CVI programs?

ARCVi Domain: Finding and Sustaining Funding

A care-centered budget shows funders that your program is not only funding activities, but also investing in the people and conditions that make violence intervention possible. In CVI, budgets that ignore staff stability, participant barriers, wellness, and basic organizational infrastructure often understate what the work really costs and set programs up to struggle later. **Key idea:** Do not budget only for direct services. Budget for care—for staff, participants, families, learning, and the organizational systems that make the work sustainable.

What makes a budget “care-centered”?

- ✓ It reflects your mission and values, not just your program activities.
- ✓ It makes visible the costs that are often treated as “extra” but are actually essential to success.
- ✓ It treats staff stability, participant support, and organizational health as part of the intervention—not separate from it.
- ✓ It helps funders understand that stronger care for staff, participants, and community conditions can improve program quality and long-term impact.

Core budget elements to include

- **Living wages and job stability:** Budget for fair salaries for all staff, including credible messengers, peer workers, outreach staff, and case managers. Frontline worker stability is essential to trust-building, retention, and public safety impact.
- **Fringe benefits and health coverage:** Include payroll taxes, health insurance, retirement contributions, and paid leave where possible. A care-centered budget should not depend on burnout or undercompensated labor.
- **Staff wellness and mental health support:** Include counseling, reflective supervision, respite supports, mental health days, team retreats, and wellness activities. These are not luxuries in high-stress CVI work.
- **Professional development and leadership pipelines:** Budget for training, coaching, conferences, certifications, and advancement opportunities so frontline staff can grow into long-term careers.
- **Participant supports that reduce barriers:** Include transportation, food, childcare, work gear, stipends, emergency assistance, and other supports that make engagement possible.
- **Community engagement stipends:** Pay residents, advisors, and community members for their time, expertise, and participation in planning, outreach, advisory roles, or co-design.
- **Emergency reserve or flexible response funds:** Even modest reserve funds can help a program respond to participant crises, unexpected costs, or short-term disruptions without destabilizing the whole budget.
- **Administrative infrastructure:** Include technology, communications, bookkeeping, HR support, financial management, insurance, and other operating costs. Many programs need at least 15–20% for infrastructure that makes service delivery possible.
- **Evaluation and learning:** Budget for performance measurement, data systems, evaluation support, and time to review what is working. Learning should be built into the budget, not added only if money is left over.

Questions to ask before finalizing the budget

- ☐ Does this budget reflect the true cost of doing the work well, or only the easiest costs to explain?
- ☐ Have we included what staff need to stay healthy, effective, and retained?
- ☐ Have we budgeted for participant barriers to engagement, not just program activities?
- ☐ Are we asking the program to absorb important costs that should be paid for directly?
- ☐ Does the budget match our theory of change, staffing model, and stated outcomes?
- ☐ If the grant is restrictive or reimbursement-based, do we have a plan for cash flow and uncovered costs?

How to explain a care-centered budget to funders

A strong budget justification should make the case that these costs are part of effective violence intervention. For example, staff wellness, participant transportation, supervision, and administrative support should be described as costs that improve engagement, retention, implementation quality, and safety. If a line item looks unusual to a funder, explain how it reduces barriers, protects staff, or strengthens the program's ability to deliver results.

Example budget categories to highlight

Category	Examples	Why it matters
Frontline staffing	salaries, fringe, supervision	Supports continuity, trust, and retention
Participant support	transportation, food, stipends, emergency needs	Removes barriers to engagement
Wellness and safety	counseling, respite, debriefing, safety supports	Reduces burnout and secondary trauma
Infrastructure	technology, finance, communications, HR	Makes program delivery and compliance possible
Learning and evaluation	database, reporting, evaluator, staff review time	Documents progress and improves practice

Bottom line

A care-centered budget is not inflated—it is honest. It shows what it really takes to support staff, participants, and community-based work in ways that are ethical, effective, and sustainable. When CVI programs budget only for visible program activities, they often leave out the very supports that make success possible.

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[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.

[ARCvi.org](https://arcvi.org): See also: Supporting the Frontline • Using Data that Matters • Finding and Sustaining Funding