

Chapter 6: Creating Economic Opportunity Through Partnership



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Knowing how other agencies have structured their economic empowerment partnerships can help organizations design their own approach to collaborations. However, no two collaborations or partnerships will look alike even if they share some base values and commonalities. Based on organizational mission, the community served, geographic location, and surrounding economic opportunities and connections to those opportunities- each partnership will look different.

Included in the guide are [Case Studies](#) of victim services agencies and the collaborations they formed. Each are from different areas of the country, serve different populations, and different levels of experience in addressing the educational and employment needs of survivors; yet, each organization has innovated to create employment, education and/or entrepreneurship opportunities by leveraging these four principles:

- Supported employment for survivors
- Employment program/partner vetting
- Creating/leveraging community relationships
- Survivor confidentiality

Supported Employment

There are numerous barriers to success that survivors face when seeking an employment opportunity, entering an educational setting, or accessing entrepreneurship incubation resources. Survivors may be re-traumatized or triggered in traditional workplaces in both the formal and informal economy as many replicate the same power dynamics and forms of exploitation that are used by traffickers, or expose workers to other forms of discrimination or harassment that are common in low-wage sectors. Many survivors might feel overwhelmed and not know where to begin or how to respond when facing obstacles or harm in the workplace or workforce system. Supported employment can help mitigate barriers and help a survivor feel empowered when beginning a training, certification program, vocational or entrepreneurship apprenticeship, or job opportunity.

Some forms of supported employment include:

- Case management;
- Access to mental health counseling or therapy;
- Access to housing or help attaining housing;
- Access to free or low-cost childcare;
- Job and life skills coaching; and,
- Cash assistance , scholarships, stipends or wages.

Many of these services can be supported by the victim services agency as partners to workforce development programs, as they are familiar with trauma-informed approaches when working with trafficking survivors as clients. The victim services agency and local workforce partner can work together to come up with a comprehensive supported employment plan to decrease the effects of trauma and instability while a survivor gains skills, knowledge, and experience to become enter and success in the workforce. For example, the victim services agency could provide case management, transitional housing, and therapy while a community college or job training program provides on-site childcare, job coaching and job fairs at a local community college.

Addressing survivors' income and financial skill development needs as part of supported employment is key to ensuring that they remain free from trafficking. Survivors of trafficking and abuse often experience financial abuse and lasting financial insecurity as a result of the perpetrator's actions, and may not have access to financial skills or knowledge necessary to fund an education or training opportunity.¹ In some cases, they may have had their identity to obtain loans that were not repaid or coerced to commit crimes thus creating additional barriers to financial stability.

Trafficking is a sophisticated business model that must be counteracted with an equally powerful economic solution. Therefore, it is important that economic empowerment programming include the following opportunities for survivors:

Financial literacy and education: to equip survivors with the skills to create and follow a budget, understand financial institutions and tools, build and repair credit, remediate debt, pay taxes, and understand savings and retirement accounts. There are community organizations that also provide this service and might be good partners if a victim service agency does not have the expertise or capacity to offer this service in-house.

Asset-building and flexible funding: can consist of (1) matched-savings programs or Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)² to build savings, and (2) flexible funding or rapid cash assistance for emergency support. Some banks, such as Wells Fargo, have financial inclusion initiatives which provide alternative means for survivors to fulfill their requirements for opening accounts, and have trained their staff to deliver trauma-

informed customer care in the process. Other national programs, such as [Bank On](#), offers no-cost, second chance bank accounts for those with poor or no banking histories.

Note: it is not trauma-informed or survivor center to REQUIRE survivors participating in a service program to contribute to a savings program or other type of asset-building program. Remember, survivor voice, choice, and empowerment need to be built into all aspects of programming.

Scholarships, stipends or wages: it is critical to pay survivors for work performed, even during training, to avoid replicating the dynamics of the trafficking experience. As shown in the Survivor Ventures case study, grant funding was used to pay clients in the job training program. Funding options may include (1) community resources that can provide financial support through grants, stipends, or fundraising, (2) accessible scholarship or grant funding for survivors who are in school, and (3) partnerships with job training programs and apprenticeships that provide paid opportunities.

Employment Program/Partner Vetting

Not every program within the community will be a good fit for partnership or collaboration. Some businesses and programs may not pay an equitable and life-sustaining wage. Others may be too rigid in their job training program to accept the complex needs of a trafficking survivor. Many may not share organizational values and vision for the future, or be open to a long-term partnership. These are all questions and aspects to consider when vetting employment programs or businesses to ensure they are the right partners for your economic empowerment initiative:

1. **Examine mutual expectations** about the partnership. What time, money, and effort will each organization put into the partnership? Are there similar values or shared values of what each program is trying to achieve? Some agencies or employers might not be aligned with to partnership expectations or with organizational mission or values. Discussing expectations and finding shared values will help inform the type of partnership you seek.
2. **Survivor safety** comes first. Vet the partner organization for potential safety concerns prior to placing a survivor at the physical or remote location. Background checks may be necessary for those coming into close contact with survivors to ensure that the program or workplace does not employ current or former traffickers, or other perpetrators of

violence. Considerations include physical safety and accessibility. Is the location physically accessible? Does it require working with dangerous equipment, or is it in an industry with a high risk of workplace harassment or violence (such as isolated workspaces or subcontracted employment)? Does the program welcome and support people of diverse lived experiences, identities, and cultures? These questions can help clarify if the employer will be the right partner to help survivors succeed.

3. **Size of the program.** There are both positives and negatives for larger programs involving more people, as well as for smaller programs that can be more personalized. Larger programs or companies can provide confidentiality and access to more resources for help. Large programs tend to be structured and formalized, which means it can be easier to replicate harmful power dynamics, discrimination, or harassment without repercussions.

Smaller programs and workplaces can provide tailored one-on-one mentorship and guidance and can potentially offer the survivor more responsibilities and learning opportunities. However, smaller programs and workplaces can also be less safe if there is no formal complaint system or human resources department to address workplace harms. Each survivor will have different expectations for an economic opportunity, so some may be better suited to certain programs and businesses than others.

For additional considerations, refer to [Chapter 3](#).

Creating and Leveraging Community Relationships

To find a partner, it may prove useful to map out individual, team, department, and organizational relationships and assets. On each level, these resources can help to strengthen success of the partnership and the project. The **community mapping tool** below highlights different sectors to target for building relationships, as well as potential gains from being in relationship with that resource.



For mapping out community relationships, think about having a variety of sectors and interests represented as well as different strengths and resources that each brings to the potential partnership. One potential path is to leverage personal connections with people inside your organization to make introductions to other organizations, such as in the Restore NYC case study. Another approach is utilizing an organization’s Board of Directors to tap into relationships they have, as they may interact with varied sectors of a community.

Survivor Privacy and Confidentiality

Survivor healing, thriving, and input needs to be addressed at the beginning, middle, and end of every collaboration or partnership. Another core aspect of each case study is survivor safety, which involves agreements and structures around privacy and confidentiality.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) and the Confidentiality Institute defines confidentiality as “the ethical principle or legal right that a professional will hold secret all information relating to a client, unless the client gives consent permitting disclosure.”³ It is important to note that confidentiality is different than privacy

based on individual state laws and legal definitions. Privacy is defined as “the right to... determine whether, when, how, and to whom one’s personal information is to be revealed”.⁴

Once you find a few programs or employers you are interested in partnering with, have an open and honest discussion around what type and level of privacy versus legal confidentiality will be needed to maintain a successful partnership.

In some cases, it might be the best that no one except the partnership coordinator knows who is a survivor. In other cases, it might make the most sense to have the direct supervisor know and receive training on trauma-informed supervision. Regardless, survivors who might participate in the program or partnership should have a voice regarding the level

Visit [the Confidentiality Institute](#) to learn more about privacy versus confidentiality and any potential legal implications.

[The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking \(CAST\)](#) also provides individualized technical assistance on assisting trafficking survivors with legal needs.

of privacy they expect. Once a definition of privacy or confidentiality is set, have the partnership members sign agreements. Ensuring that roles and responsibilities will not change and building trust among partnership staff and employees will help to solidify a strong foundation for your partnership.

Taking the Next Steps: Sustaining Your Partnership

Forming successful relationships and designing a program to provide economic and employment opportunities for survivors of trafficking is a long-term process that will have ups and downs but can lead to long-term success for survivors. After learning about the workforce development system, fundamental aspects of collaboration, and concrete examples of these partnerships, it is important to consider how to sustain the partnership over the long-term.

[Continue on to Chapter 7.](#)

[1] Gonzalez Bocinski, Sarah; Dusenbery, Malore. “Economic Abuse Fact Sheet.” IWPR 2020. Accessed April 21, 2021. <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-general/economic-abuse-fact-sheet/>

[2] ORDP, OISP. "Understanding SSI – SSI Spotlight on Individual Development Accounts." Accessed June 15, 2021. <https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-individual-development.htm>.

[3] Aiken, Alicia. "A Primer on Privilege & Confidentiality For Victim Service Providers." National Network to End Domestic Violence, The Confidentiality Institute, 2015. <https://nnedv.org/?mdocs-file=2447>.

[4] Aiken, Alicia. "A Primer on Privilege & Confidentiality For Victim Service Providers." National Network to End Domestic Violence, The Confidentiality Institute, 2015. <https://nnedv.org/?mdocs-file=2447>