Moving Towards Organizational Best Practice

# Development

In most Chicago-based nonprofits street intervention workers have primarily been employed as contractors or funded through grants intended for community-based violence prevention work. A worker’s position may be entirely dependent on a singular funding source or a singular grant, which makes them vulnerable in the case of funding fluctuations, If the funding source is compromised, street intervention workers lose their jobs.

Street intervention workers reflected in their narratives the instability of funding for their work and associated stress. One theme that emerged from analysis was the sentiment of ‘chasing money’ and overextending workers to be able to apply for an expanded selection of grants. This led some study participants to reflect a sentiment of missional blur or mission creep, when an organization’s development strategy is reactive to the funding landscape rather than seeking funding opportunities that align with the organization’s mission and vision. Furthermore, study participants implied that grant applications are seldom submitted with their feedback; rarely are they consulted by development staff in terms of programmatic needs or opportunities for program innovation that could be pursued through grantmaking, nor are they consulted when administrative staff decides to pursue a funding opportunity that implicates their work. Study participants indicated that additional funding to support their work could include:

*I think what would help me manage through this process and this work was the education I got in from social work. Um, if I had the funding, I would send every single one of them to school. Um, because although I am not practicing everything that I've learned, it has helped me, uh, manage my stressors, my trauma, right? And I've been able to allow people to support my feelings, my work, and everything that I do.*

*If I hear a program and this program, the way they're doing it or what they're doing I know it's not as effective as it could be and we can push for something better or different, or I feel like we're doing what we've done already, and it won't change as much as if we change our strategy, if we're allowed to push for a different strategy, that's when I get really-- I'm really struggling now.*

# Food for Thought

* + Is the employment stability of street intervention workers comparable to other employees within your organization?
  + What is the process for applying for grants within the organization, and to what extent are street intervention workers integrated into grants pertaining to their work?
  + How are grant opportunities to support street intervention work vetted by the organization?
  + How informed are development staff of street intervention work? (Have they met 1-1 with workers, visited program sites, attended community meetings, etc.)
  + How attuned are development staff to the needs of street intervention workers within the organization? (Is there a mechanism in place where program needs are transmitted to development staff)?