Moving Towards Organizational Best Practice

# Finance

Street intervention workers frequently mentioned “pay” as a factor associated with their traumatic stress. While higher salary would clearly not prevent their exposure to violence while performing work duties, it could increase access to resources that could contribute to their overall wellbeing and health. This may involve the ability to purchase a gym membership, seek counseling, or even remove the need to seek additional work due to increase the overall income. Street intervention workers reflected an awareness of unequal pay across nonprofits that employ street intervention workers; some organizations pay better than others. This can create competition across nonprofits where workers may leave one organization due to higher pay in a different nonprofit. Under ideal circumstances, street intervention workers would receive equal pay and benefits across nonprofits in Chicago to eliminate this competition.

*They definitely need to show respect for the field, you know, they always talking about paying everybody a decent wage, and 30 thou--32, 34, 36,000 ain't a decent wage. That's why they have a lot of turnover.*

Street intervention workers also shared that they are underpaid within their own organizations compared to other forms of community outreach workers, such as community health workers or community organizers. Parity in salary among street-level workers within an organization is recommended. Community-based organizations often perform multiple and varied forms of community outreach. This provides an opportunity to consider how street intervention work occurs in tandem with other forms of community outreach, and if there are opportunities to ‘braid’ funding streams. For example, if community health workers are doing community outreach around mental health awareness and conducting an event in a local park, are street intervention workers invited to participate and share information about their services as well? If this level of program integration occurs, there is potential to braid funding streams with street-level positions. In other words, multiple funding sources contribute to the income of a street intervention worker. This could not only generate more cohesive community engagement but also contribute to the job stability of street intervention workers.

*It’s bad that when one organization pay more, but you all doing the same work, and everybody knows everybody eating out of the same budget. It kind of brings a discord among the workers.*

Similar to the reflections related to grantsmanship, the narratives of study participants indicated a high degree of separation from resource management and program implementation. With a lack of understanding or awareness of how funding sources are managed, frontline workers may feel disconnected from administration or even ‘used’ by their organizations. Learning about budget management, restrictions associated with different funding resources, and how organizations track spending is an underutilized form of professional development.

# Food for Thought

* + Is the salary allocation for street intervention workers commensurate with other street-level employees within the organization?
	+ Is the salary allocation for street intervention workers similar to other community-based organizations employing street intervention workers?
	+ What do street intervention workers suggest as a fair compensation for their efforts?
	+ How informed are finance staff of street intervention work? (Have they met 1-1 with workers, visited program sites, attended community meetings, etc.)
	+ How informed are street intervention workers of nonprofit financial management? (Do they know the finance staff, have they seen a budget before, etc.)