

2020 REPORT

# SURVIVOR FUND

INVEST IN SAFETY.  
PREVENT HOMELESSNESS.  
PROMOTE HEALING.



**VIOLENCE FREE**  
MINNESOTA





# SUMMARY

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) began the Economic Empowerment Survivor Fund Project in 2017. Since its beginning, we have become more aware of the economic challenges and financial hardships associated with domestic violence. As Violence Free Minnesota continues to champion our efforts to end relationship abuse, we have dedicated an area of focus for survivors to obtain financial education and cash grants as they work to restore themselves and their families.

With generous support from the Pohlad and Allstate Foundations, VFMN led an initiative with our member programs across Minnesota to focus on the economic empowerment of victim/survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Emotional, physical and financial tactics are used to create abusive relationship dynamics that disempower survivors. As a result, VFMN has sought partnerships with foundations and organizations dedicated to help restore survivors' personal power.

The Survivor Fund offers one-time, low-barrier cash grants to victims of sexual and domestic violence.

The Survivor Fund (economic empowerment program) partners with survivor advocacy programs to address the economic instability faced by victims and survivors. The Survivor Fund Project provides economic empowerment and financial literacy training to advocates who then serve as resources to victims/survivors. The Survivor Fund offers a one-time, low-barrier cash grant to domestic and sexual violence victims/survivors for the purposes of increasing and/or maintaining housing stability and building credit. We believe meeting victims/survivors' economic needs will have a positive impact on safety.

# OVERVIEW: 2020 SURVIVOR FUND

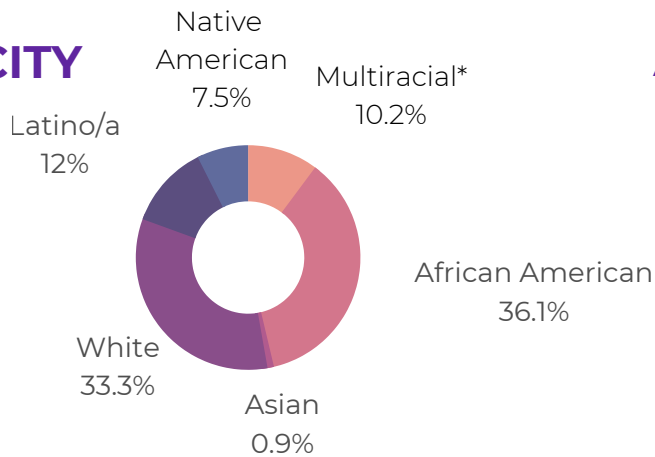
**128** GRANTS TO SURVIVORS  
GRANT RANGE: \$500 - \$1500

## DEMOGRAPHICS

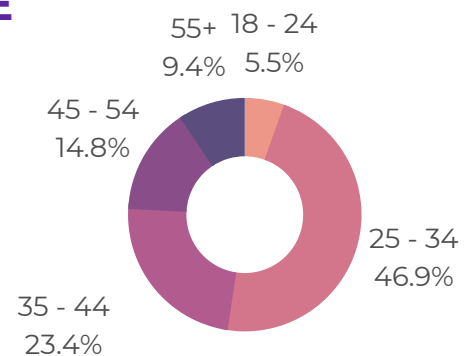
**97%** APPLICATIONS FROM WOMEN

**18** APPLICATIONS FROM UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

### ETHNICITY



### AGE



\*Multiracial or no ethnic indicator

## HOW SURVIVORS USED GRANTS



RENTAL ASSISTANCE



RELOCATION



CAR REPAIRS



CREDIT REPAIR



UTILITY BILLS



CHILDCARE & HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

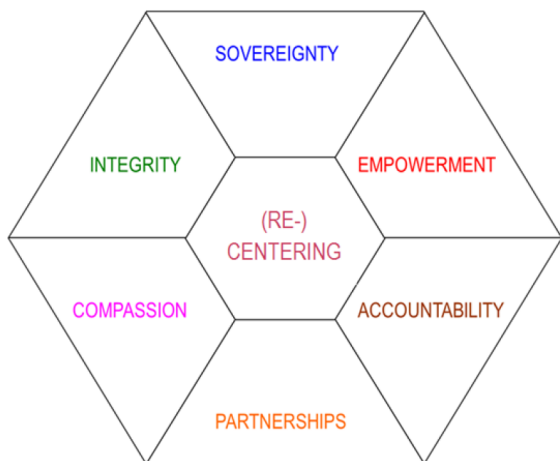
# ADVOCATES SAY...

*Her demeanor changed from defeated to 'I can do this' when she got the check.*

*She was able to focus on support groups and spend time to learn and heal.*

*The fund helped her with that final barrier to stable permanent housing. Her kids can still attend the same schools they had become a part of while with us, which is its own stability. Getting that help to make this happen - it looked like a literal weight just lifted off of her.*





*DASH Model Principles*

VFMN modeled Survivor Fund access after the DASH Model of Washington D.C. DASH implements a low barrier approach to increase access for all survivors. The DASH Model consists of seven principles. It requires that "employees behave with survivors in ways that are responsive (**accountability**), consistent (**integrity**), empathetic (**compassion**), mutually cooperative and respectful (**partnerships**), while also providing tools to promote personal power (**empowerment**) and supporting survivors' right to be self-governing (**sovereignty**). If employees veer too far into any one direction, they are called to reflect and determine how to find balance (**re-centering**)."



*"I was a month behind in my rent and the fund covered exactly what was needed and just in time." - Survivor Fund recipient*

## The Survivor Fund: Three Program Components

### **Financial Empowerment**

Advocates receive basic skill-building and knowledge around financial literacy, empowering them to incorporate these concepts into their own lives as well as the lives of participating victim/survivors.

### **Technical Assistance**

Advocates receive ongoing technical assistance from the team on matters of implementing financial empowerment groups with their participants, locating community resources, and integrating economic justice work into their program.

### **Survivor Fund**

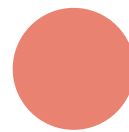
Victims/survivors will have access to a one-time, low barrier cash grant through the Economic Survivor Fund to help victims and survivors increase and/or maintain their housing stability and/or for credit repair.

Violence Free Minnesota's 93 member programs - located across Minnesota - are invited to participate in the Survivor Fund. Twenty-six member programs focus on providing culturally specific services including outreach and tailored services (4 tribal programs, 20 BIPOC programs, 1 LGBTQ program, 1 Deaf program). The coalition's Survivor Fund reaches culturally-specific communities through our member programs. Equally important, VFMN has prioritized funds for undocumented immigrant survivors.

In spring 2020, COVID-19 became a reality in Minnesota. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted all of the gaps and problems that already existed around housing making them much more visible. The lack of emergency domestic violence shelter space, the barriers to securing housing (i.e. poor rental and credit histories, criminal records, low-wage employment), the lack of safe, affordable housing options, all of these issues became more urgent. We contemplated seeking permission to shift the Survivor Fund, which focuses on longer-term housing stability issues, into an emergency fund and decided not to do this. We proceeded with the Survivor Fund but took a more lenient approach, paying for some emergency-type housing needs. By maintaining the focus of the Survivor Fund, we learned that even during the economic crisis of the pandemic, people are still working on longer-term housing stability goals. Some of those goals include purchasing a home and building savings in order to weather unexpected financial hardship.

## 100% of survivors used money to secure or maintain housing.

As we continue to adjust to new ways of working (i.e. doing most everything virtually), we are identifying ways to work with advocacy programs to increase their economic empowerment work with survivors. We have identified champion programs- programs committed to doing economic empowerment work with the coalition- and will use these programs for peer learning and support in the coming year. The identified programs are Casa de Esperanza, Cornerstone Advocacy Services, Oasis of Love Crisis Intervention, White Earth DOVE Program, and Women's Advocates.



*"I acquired new housing and thought the fund was a big help that I really appreciated."*

*Survivor Fund recipient*

# THE FUTURE

The path to economic stability is more than receiving a check or financial assistance to alleviate short-term crisis. The work is much broader than that. We are working to create long-term remedies, not short-term fixes.

We hope to expand partnerships for this work and continue to strengthen advocacy programs' ability to provide economic empowerment to victims/survivors and provide cash grants to help victims/survivors achieve their financial stability goals. We are exploring the possibility of leveraging other corporate and crowdfunding entities so that the Survivor Fund becomes a continuing resource that is available every day throughout the year.

