

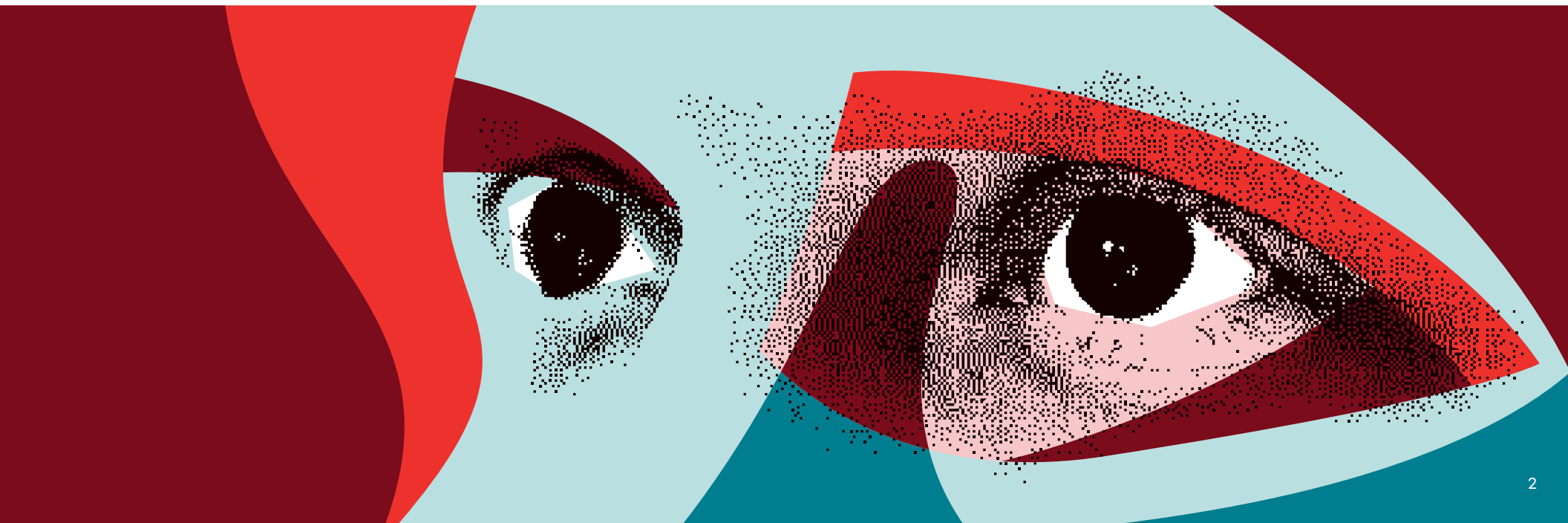
# Path to Freedom

How twelve organizations are driving economic empowerment through survivor entrepreneurship



# Outline

- I.** Executive Summary
- II.** No Dreams in Survival Mode
- III.** Barriers to Entry
- IV.** Survivor Entrepreneurship
- V.** Foundations for the Future
- VI.** Meet the Leaders
- VII.** Appendix



# About Restore

Restore exists to make freedom real for survivors of trafficking in the United States. Since 2009, Restore has pioneered innovative housing, economic empowerment, and wellbeing solutions that provide survivors of trafficking opportunities for safe, affordable housing, economic opportunities, and trauma-specific counseling and case management.

Based in New York City, Restore promotes empowerment-based initiatives and activates strategic cross-sector collaboration to promote impact-driven solutions. Examples include the incubation of survivor-owned businesses, including a social enterprise with 60+ members that obtained contracts from 40+ organizations in a 5-year period. Restore's partners for economic empowerment include NYU, Workshop in Business Opportunities (WIBO), and Defy Ventures for its entrepreneurship training and the Survivor Inclusion Initiative in partnership with the Liechtenstein Initiative for financial and banking services.

Restore's mission includes training and resourcing agencies across the country. As a leader and convener in the anti-trafficking space, Restore aims to influence strategies, reduce systemic barriers, and improve tracking of impact in the field. Both for its own initiatives, and when working with agencies, Restore runs pilots, measures impact, and iterates to generate successful outcomes.

Last year, Restore collaborated with industry leaders in the field to create a report "Road to Recovery" in response to the impacts of COVID-19. Shortly after its release, Restore was invited to present the findings to President Biden's White House inter-agency task force to monitor and combat human trafficking. The report was then referenced in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, a report released each year by the State Department as an example of creative and collaborative responses during the pandemic (page 21, 2021 TIP Report). This highlight shows us what is possible in the future: the scaling of our collective impact nationwide. This year we hope to continue that momentum in an effort to collaboratively drive attention to the best practices in Economic Empowerment through Survivor Entrepreneurship.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.restorenyc.org](http://www.restorenyc.org)



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**“Entrepreneurship provides survivors of trafficking with a viable avenue to secure economic resources for themselves and their families.”**

## Executive Summary

Survivors of trafficking face significant socioeconomic barriers which require equally significant public policy responses and organizational support. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and other physiological effects of trauma inhibit a survivor’s ability to see positive ways forward while economic factors perpetuate the cycle of exploitation. Policy makers, advocates, and organizations can work to make changes that help survivors access economic opportunities. However, these changes take time and survivors of trafficking cannot wait.

In the short term, entrepreneurship provides survivors of trafficking with a viable avenue to secure economic resources for themselves and their families. Entrepreneurship, being one more tool in the toolkit, allows survivors to capitalize on pre-existing aspirations, build confidence, and control their future.

**In this report, twelve of the leading non-profit organizations in the country outline a set of best practices for programs that seek to promote entrepreneurship for survivors of trafficking, and individuals with intersecting vulnerabilities.**

The Restore research team interviewed twelve leaders building innovative programs that create opportunities for survivors and other marginalized individuals beyond a living wage. The purpose of this report is to share best practices in economic empowerment through survivor entrepreneurship and to call upon policymakers and corporations to remove obstacles for work authorization, while driving further investment into this space.

# Highlights from the Report

The purpose of the Path to Freedom report is to share best practices in economic empowerment through survivor entrepreneurship and to call upon policymakers and corporations to remove obstacles for work authorization, while driving further investment into this space. We summarize the insights from twelve leaders building innovative programs that create opportunities for survivors and other marginalized individuals beyond a living wage. The organizations listed in this report received funding through private, federal, and state grants as well as corporate sponsors and private **donations at a range of \$450,000 to \$11.7 million per fiscal year.**

All organizations worked to help survivors and others with intersecting vulnerabilities see their potential as entrepreneurs while using trauma-informed, survivor-centered methods of program delivery.

Organizations partnered with corporations, local and state governments, and private donors to provide business and personal development, legal assistance, funding, and technical training using in-person and online delivery methods to support survivor entrepreneurs.

## Actionable Steps for Stakeholders

### **Call to Corporate: If you can't hire, invest.**

- In business startup capital
- In certifications
- In nonprofit organizations

### **Call to Communities: Become sponsors.**

- Form cooperatives and source financing to sponsor projects at a local level for returns that beat inflation and strengthen communities.
- Buy or contract from survivor-owned businesses.

### **Call to the Industry: Provide skill-building opportunities.**

- Create economic empowerment programs through entrepreneurship for survivors to learn and grow within a venture of interest.
- Provide pro-bono services and resources to survivor-owned businesses.

### **Call to Educators: Provide the necessary tools for success.**

- Increase access to livable wage careers through funded certification programs.
- Provide culturally-informed instructional materials in several languages.
- Design flexible programs that meet the needs of survivors.

## Recommendations: Foundations for the Future

### **Call to Policy Makers (Federal)**

- **Amend the Trafficking Victims Protection Act** to expand the ability to file Continued Presence applications at the state, local, and tribal levels of government agencies. These include law enforcement, juvenile justice providers, child welfare agencies, court systems, immigration attorneys, prosecutors, and state-appointed service providers. Appoint a survivor advocate for each jurisdiction.
- **US Citizenship and Immigration Services (UCIS)** to provide immediate work authorization for T-Visa applicants, as processing times for this visa application may take up to 33 months.
- **Gather information on victims of trafficking** over the number of traffickers or cases. Prioritize thorough data collection on the number of Continued Presence applications filed each year.
- **Update FAST program requirements.** Small business loans of \$10,000 for 12-months 0% interest are not accessible to a survivor without a personal credit score readily available for the application process. Support organizations with sponsors to help survivors secure loans.
- **At the state level,** allow entrepreneurs who are survivors of trafficking to obtain required licenses and permits while in the process of receiving immigration relief.

# Leaders Interviewed

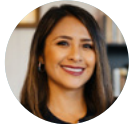
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**Andrew Glazier**  
CEO  
Defy Ventures



**Cynthia Luvlee**  
Founder & Executive Director  
Shyne



**Iliana Perez**  
Director of Research & Entrepreneurship  
Immigrants Rising



**Jean Bruggeman**  
Executive Director  
Freedom Network USA



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**Sandra Diaz**  
Director of Economic Empowerment  
Restore NYC



# No Dreams in Survival Mode





## No Dreams in Survival Mode

Every year, the **private economy reaps \$150 billion dollars in illegal profit from human trafficking** (Neithammer, 2020). An estimated 40 million individuals worldwide are lured into trafficking each year due to unemployment, debt, and desperation (Toney-Butler, Ladd, & Mittel, 2021). The majority of these individuals are women, girls, and migrant workers (Toney-Butler, Ladd, & Mittel, 2021). Exploiters promise economic opportunities, job training, and financial assistance in exchange for labor, then exploit workers through debt bondage and require free labor or even prostitution as a means of repayment (Polaris Project, 2015). Survivors of human trafficking often develop post-traumatic stress disorder, which causes physiological symptoms that make it difficult to envision a way out of exploitation.

According to a 2015 report, **39% of adults and 27% of children are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of trafficking** (Oram et. al.). Post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental health condition characterized by physiological symptoms that impact a survivor's day-to-day life for years after the traumatizing event (Mayo Clinic, 2018). Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder include distressing and intrusive memories, avoidance of places, activities, or people that remind the survivor of the event, negative thinking, low self-esteem, hopelessness, memory problems, hypervigilance, self-destructive behavior, difficulty sleeping, trouble concentrating, irritability, guilt, and shame (Mayo Clinic, 2018). This perpetuates the cycle of abuse and leaves survivors vulnerable to re-trafficking.

Workforce development policies first enacted in the United States during the Great Depression and still in effect today under the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provide economic assistance to underrepresented groups and stimulate the economy during times of economic downturn (PA Workforce Development Association, 2021). Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the government works with local and state programs to train, recruit and hire workers for in-demand jobs (Employment and Training Administration). Historically, these programs have not prioritized trauma-informed care and/or programs with a gender-based lens. However, these programs may effectively improve the economic status of survivors living with trauma.

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Human trafficking is a

# \$150 billion

dollar industry.

(Neithammer, 2020)

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An estimated

# 40 million

individuals are trafficked worldwide each year, according to the ILO.

(International Labour Office & Walk Free Foundation, 2017)

In August 2020, the National Institute of Justice released a report which stated that the true number of trafficked individuals is **severely underestimated** due to lack of reporting.

(National Institute of Justice, 2020)



In 2021, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released a report providing best practices for workforce development and nonprofit organizations seeking to provide trauma-informed services to the public.

**Among other recommendations, this report provided a 4 R's framework for trauma-informed systems:**

- Realize the impact of trauma and pathways for recovery
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Respond with policies, procedures, and practices
- Resist re-traumatization

*(Choitz and Wagner, 2021)*

Many of the organizations highlighted in this report are focused on building programs that realize, recognize, and respond to trauma symptoms in order to help survivors rise above survival mode and into economic empowerment. **We're building the foundation for gender-based, trauma-informed, and flexible programs that have survivors' unique needs at the center and lead to high-wage career opportunities in fields of interest. Survivor-centered organizations can interrupt the economic factors that lead to trafficking, provide trauma-informed services, and stop the cycle of exploitation.**

**Policies, systems, and organizations  
can help survivors become  
economically empowered through  
trauma-informed care.**

*(Choitz and Wagner, 2021)*

---

**39% of adults and 27%  
of children** are diagnosed  
with post-traumatic stress  
disorder as a result of  
trafficking.

*(Oram, Khondoker, Abas, Broadbent &  
Howard, 2015)*

---

**PTSD is treatable.**

Medical researchers  
have found increasingly  
effective treatments  
that can help to reduce  
the symptoms of PTSD  
over time.

*(The Recovery Village, 2021)*

# Barriers to Entry



## Barriers to Entry

*“It’s important to understand the ways we systematically create trafficking through an immigration system which makes it hard for workers and protects employers. We create a situation in which employers are given the power to abuse and exploit workers with little oversight through legal visas.”*

*(Jean Bruggeman, Executive Director, Freedom Network USA)*

Survivors of trafficking are not vulnerable to exploitation by default but instead are made vulnerable by complex socioeconomic factors including income inequality, public policy, criminal history, and precarious migration status. To realize the impact of these socioeconomic factors on survivors, it’s important to understand the structure of the United States immigration systems in relationship to survivors of human trafficking, as well as the economic factors that make employment untenable for many survivors.

### Barriers to Work Authorization and Residency

Many trafficking survivors are brought to the US illegally, others enter on legal visas through which the employer has complete control over the immigration status of the worker. Therefore survivors may lack access to options for legal employment, economic resources, and housing which leaves them vulnerable to further exploitation.

This adds the reality that a significant number of foreign national survivors have entered the US on legal visas but are exploited because of the way those visa programs are designed.

To mitigate this risk, the United States government provides pathways to temporary residency and work authorization through continued presence and T-Visas (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021). Continued presence provides temporary status for immigrants to live and work in the US for two years at a time and is renewable in two-year increments over the duration of the trafficking investigation (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021). Survivors who have continued presence may also apply for a T-Visa. T-Visas last four years of temporary nonimmigrant status and put survivors on the path to a green card and citizenship (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021). However, barriers to application and extended processing time for continued presence and T-Visas leave trafficking survivors at risk of deportation or re-trafficking, particularly if a survivor’s continued presence status expires prior to T-Visa approval (Bruggeman, 2019).

“People choose to go back to trafficking situations because they have no other path toward economic freedom.”

*– Kofi Kenyatta, Director of Policy and Practice, UpTogether*

18-30  
months

*Average processing time  
for T-Visa Form I914\**

6-12  
weeks

*Average processing time  
for Continued Presence\**

*\* Average processing time based on applications filed September 2018. Updated processing times available via <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/> (Bruggeman, 2019)*

In order to gain continued presence status, a survivor must report victimization to law enforcement personnel. Federal agents such as law enforcement personnel, HSI, or FBI agents hold sole authority and responsibility to file continued presence applications and are legally required to do so for all individuals related to an active human trafficking investigation (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021). However, **law enforcement personnel are not obligated to record transparent data on human trafficking survivors identified nor are law enforcement departments otherwise incentivized to submit continued presence applications** (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021).

In order to apply for a T-Visa, survivors must present evidence through personal testimony that qualifies their case as severe trafficking, which federal law defines as follows:

*“1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced to perform such an act is under 18; or 2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, forced labor, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”*  
(American Civil Liberties Union, 2021)

Presenting such evidence requires that trafficking survivors complete a statement and put together a formal documentation packet, most effectively with the help of an immigration attorney. The survivor is required to report the trafficking experience to law enforcement, and comply with any reasonable requests for additional interviews from law enforcement (exceptions exist for minors and for cases of severe trauma but are difficult to obtain). This requirement may be retraumatizing for many survivors and act as a deterrent to reporting (and therefore is a barrier to legal immigration status) even if a trafficking survivor has access to the support of an advocate and an immigration lawyer. (J. Bruggeman, personal communication, 2021).

Additionally, human trafficking survivors are at risk of incarceration when interacting with law enforcement and federal agents. A study of case files from six U.S. cities found that **40 percent of trafficked minors arrested for prostitution were viewed as criminals rather than survivors**. (Office for Victims of Crime, 2015). These factors reduce the likelihood that survivors will report exploitation to law enforcement at all.

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“Undocumented immigrants are extremely vulnerable to trafficking because of fear of law enforcement and deportation.”

(American Civil Liberties Union, 2021)

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## Individuals Granted T Nonimmigrant Status (Form I-914) in Fiscal Year 2019

(U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020)

-  **1,242** Applications Received
-  **500** Applications Approved
-  **365** Applications Denied

## Barriers to Employment and Economic Freedom

Survivors who receive legal work authorization through continued presence or T-Visas still face barriers to secure employment as a result of the exploitation. Trafficking survivors often fall behind in school, lack the training needed to secure jobs, and have a hard time maintaining employment due to “negative psychological and physical effects of trafficking.” (Farell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2010) (Office for Victims of Crime 2015). In addition, a lack of legal work experience leaves survivors without a marketable resume or references and impedes them from accessing high-quality employment. Finally, many survivors leave trafficking with criminal records which immediately disqualify them for job opportunities in many states. The employment opportunities available to survivors are often low-wage, part-time, and high-risk. With few available employment options, survivors are made vulnerable to re-trafficking.

## Recommendations for Socioeconomic Equity

Complex socioeconomic factors such as income inequality, public policy, criminal history, and migration status perpetuate the exploitation of human trafficking survivors. **The following changes to public policy and legal practices may help to provide sustainable pathways to economic freedom through employment, thus mitigating the risk of**

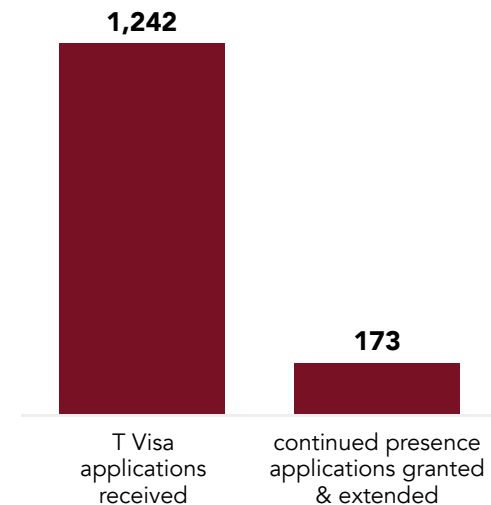
**Assist jurisdictions with training programs and task forces that ensure all federal agents understand their responsibility to indiscriminately file continued presence applications for all trafficking survivors.**

**Restrict federal grant funds to require law enforcement agencies to collect and report data on trafficking survivors to include:**

- *All reports received from trafficking survivors, disaggregated by type of trafficking*
- *Potential trafficking survivors identified either by survivor self-reporting, reports from public/advocates, or law enforcement investigation*
- *Number of potential trafficking survivors who were arrested by the law enforcement agency, crime charged, reason for making an arrest instead of referring for services, and disposition of arrest*
- *Number of foreign national potential trafficking survivors identified, number of Continued Presence applications filed, and reasons for failure to file Continued Presence applications*

## Individuals Granted Continued Presence in Fiscal Year 2019

(U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020)





Extend authorization to file continued presence applications to local, state, and tribal government agents.

Provide additional funding for adjudicators who process T-Visa applications as a means to fill department vacancies, increase retention, and reduce processing time.

Remove barriers to work and access to small business loans for applicants who have exited trafficking with a criminal history.

Provide trauma-informed training programs and monetary assistance to open sustainable, high-paying, and safe career opportunities to survivors.

#### re-trafficking.

Policymakers, federal agencies, and private organizations have the power to enact these changes and increase access to employment over time. In the meantime, survivors have the immediate need for monetary support in order to remain free from exploitation.

Entrepreneurship as a Pathway to Economic Freedom

### Entrepreneurship as a Pathway to Economic Freedom

Because legal work authorization is not required to register for an LLC, obtain a taxpayer identification number, or establish a business, **entrepreneurship provides an immediate solution to survivors seeking economic freedom.** Like any pathway to economic mobility, entrepreneurship requires support, mentorship, and access to capital. However, many survivors are excited about this option and have skills and interests they can apply to establish a sustainable income stream.

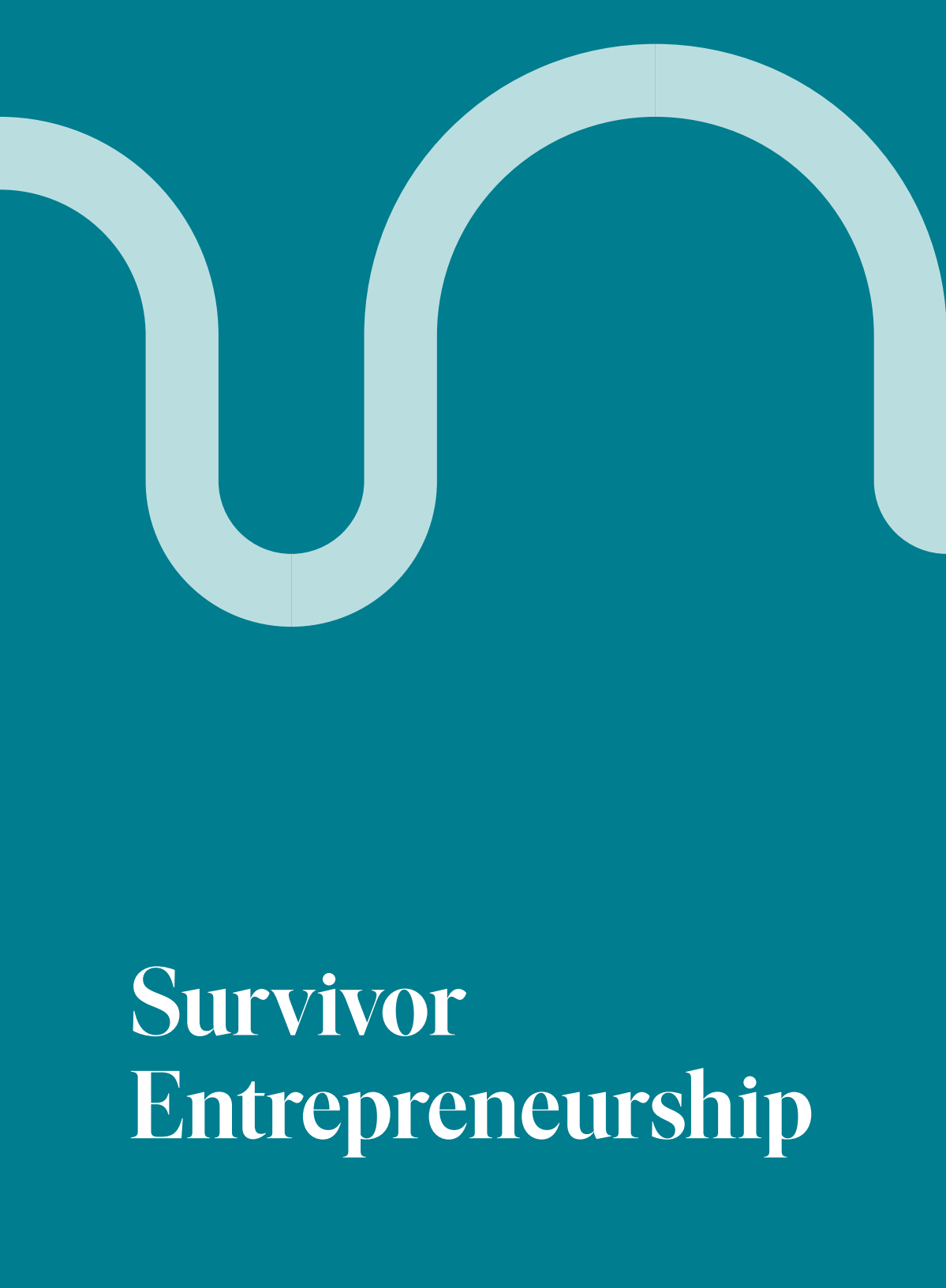
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Fewer than

50%

of human trafficking survivors who report exploitation to law enforcement receive the immediate protection they need.

*(Bruggeman, 2019)*



# Survivor Entrepreneurship





# Survivor Entrepreneurship

It is important for organizations to follow best practices in order to ensure positive outcomes for survivor entrepreneurs and their families. We have pulled together insights from twelve leaders in organizations benefiting survivors and other individuals with intersecting vulnerabilities to showcase innovative fundraising models, training initiatives, and business structures that provide access to entrepreneurial opportunities. This section summarizes key insights from these interviews to provide a window into the characteristics of successful programs and best practices for any person or organization looking to develop similar community programs.

## Organizations Benefiting Survivor Entrepreneurs

Survivor entrepreneurship programs are non-profit organizations that provide resources necessary for survivors to access entrepreneurial opportunities. These programs provide skill-based training, access to capital, and individual and community support that open pathways to economic freedom. When organizations benefiting survivors come together, we can provide a stronger network of support to help survivors reach economic freedom through business ownership.

This section overviews twelve organizations that lead the way in entrepreneurship programs for survivors and other marginalized individuals, their program highlights, and the impact of those programs.

17	DEFY VENTURES, INC.
18	SHYNE SAN DIEGO
19	IMMIGRANTS RISING
20	FREEDOM NETWORK USA
21	UPTOGETHER
22	ANNIECANNONS
23	SURVIVOR VENTURES
24	GREEN WORKER COOPERATIVES
25	NEW YORK WOMEN'S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
26	RISING TIDE CAPITAL
27	FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE
28	RESTORE NYC

# Defy Ventures, Inc.

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Under the leadership of chief executive officer Andrew Glazier, Defy Ventures provides innovative programs across the United States to help individuals who have been incarcerated get jobs, start businesses, and access personal and professional development services.

- **CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL):** Promotes employment readiness, healthy habits, and entrepreneurship training prior to release and reentry.
- **Entrepreneur Bootcamp:** Support for individuals who have re-entered society after incarceration without the support of CEO YNL.
- **Business Accelerator:** The next step after CEO YNL or Entrepreneur Bootcamp; provides entrepreneurial training to successfully incorporate, launch, and grow a business.
- **Alumni Programs:** Continued skill-building, workshops, individual and community support for alumni of Defy Ventures programs.

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**6,000+**

individuals enrolled in Defy's programs

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**6,300+**

volunteers involved

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**80%**

employment rate for Defy post-release program in 2020

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**<10%**

recidivism rate compared to 30% U.S. one-year average.

(<https://www.defyventures.org>) (A. Glazier, personal communication, 2021)

# Shyne SD

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Founded in 2018 and led by executive director Cynthia Luvlee, Shyne SD fights the underlying causes of exploitation by providing access to community, free business development services, and an online incubator program that helps survivors anywhere to reach their entrepreneurial goals.

- **Survivor Business Network:** Provides professional guidance and support to help survivors identify their natural talents and skills through leadership development, professional skills, and business courses.
- **Signature Incubator Program:** A responsive program that prioritizes self-determination, goal setting, launch readiness, and business acumen such as marketing, legal requirements, financial planning, business formation, and networking.
- **Survivor StartUp Fund:** Provides early stage startup funds from Angels to survivor entrepreneurs. Investments range from \$250-\$1500. The Fund is dedicated for expenses related to the formation and launch of new survivor owned businesses.

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39

total survivors served  
to date

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8

enrolled in incubator  
program

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5

graduated from  
incubator program

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29

received business  
support services

(<https://www.shynesd.org>) (C. Luvlee, personal communication, 2021)

# Immigrants Rising

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For more than a decade, this San Francisco-based organization has empowered undocumented individuals to achieve educational and career goals through personal, institutional, and policy transformation. Restore spoke with Director of Research & Entrepreneurship, Iliana Perez, for this report.

- **Entrepreneurship Program:** Informs the undocumented community about entrepreneurship as a viable option for individuals regardless of immigration status.
- **Financial Support:** Grants provided in sums ranging from \$5,000 - 10,000 to help immigrant entrepreneurs overcome financial barriers to business ownership.
- **Online Learning Modules:** The website hosts a free training curriculum in multiple languages where individuals can access resources and information on financial literacy, business banking, and legal requirements for business ownership.

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**80%**

of grant recipients have continued in their journey to start or scale a business.

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Personal stories and testimonials from individuals who have benefited from Immigrants Rising may be found at <https://immigrantsrising.org/stories/>.

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**\$388,000**

awarded from 2016-20 to 20 entrepreneurs.

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Immigrants Rising is currently prioritizing demographic data collection on individuals who enroll in programming, complete programming, and apply for grants.

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**\$5.4M**

will be awarded to over 600 entrepreneurs, as part of Immigrants Rising's CA SEED Initiative from 2021-22.

*(<https://immigrantsrising.org>) (I. Perez, personal interview, 2021)*

# Freedom Network USA

## Want to dive deeper?

Dig into the videos & resources at the end of the report to learn more.

Established in 2001, Freedom Network USA is the nation's largest coalition of trafficking survivors, legal and social service providers, researchers, advocacy organizations, and expert consultants working towards justice, safety, and opportunity for trafficking survivors. Restore spoke with Executive Director, Jean Bruggeman, for this report.

- **Advocacy Efforts:** Freedom Network USA advocates for changes in law, policies, and procedures in order to protect services for trafficking survivors, provide immigration remedies, and promote real and comprehensive human trafficking prevention.
- **Freedom Network USA Training Institute:** In-person and online training and resources provided by subject matter experts for professionals in the human trafficking field.
- **Survivor Reentry Project:** Focuses on criminal record relief for survivors of human trafficking through national training and technical assistance for survivors, public defenders, lawyers, pro bono attorneys, advocates, law students, judges, and prosecutors.
- **Housing Project:** Provides training and resources on housing options for survivors including appropriate emergency, transitional, or long-term housing options.
- **Capacity Building:** Supports anti-trafficking work by creating a community network where advocates can learn from each other, develop new skills, and use their expertise to make positive changes in the lives of survivors.

## \$50,000

in cash payments issued to alleviate financial strain during the pandemic.

FNTI trained thousands of professionals through virtual training during the pandemic.

## 2 years

of advocacy led the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime to reverse a harmful policy that reduced access to post-reconviction relief for survivors of human trafficking.

(<https://freedomnetworkusa.org>) (Freedom Network USA, 2020) (J. Bruggeman, personal interview, 2021)

# UpTogether

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Under the leadership of CEO, Jesús Gerena, and Director of Policy and Practice, Kofi Kenyatta, UpTogether is an organization that provides the capital, support networks, and resources survivors need to sustain themselves and their families through entrepreneurship.

- **Three Pillars:** UpTogether is a learning organization that uses a three-pillar approach of community, capital, and choice to support under-resourced and underserved communities.
- **Online Platform:** Individuals and families can form small groups online and collaborate together to achieve their goals.
- **Access to Capital:** Members have access to cash offers from funding partners and can use that investment however they choose without expectation of repayment. UpTogether distributed \$130 million dollars to 200,000 individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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23%

increase in monthly income

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77%

increase in monthly  
business outcome

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66%

new family-owned  
business activity

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36%

decrease in subsidies  
such as SNAP and TANF

*(<https://www.uptogether.org>) (J. Gerena, personal communication, 2021)*

# AnnieCannons

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Founded by Jessica Hubley and Laura Hackney, AnnieCannons leverages tech industry incomes to fight human trafficking with digital literacy training, skill development, and practical work experience necessary to seek employment or entrepreneurship opportunities in the tech industry.

- **Technical Training for Human Trafficking Survivors:** In-person and virtual programs teach digital literacy, HTML, CSS, Javascript, full-stack development, cyber security, visual design, and more.
- **Impact Outsourcing Development Shop:** Participants work on paid projects from partner companies to build a strong portfolio of work and the practical experience required for employment or entrepreneurship.
- **Student Project Incubator:** Survivors design and build software applications designed to fight trafficking and gender-based violence.

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**\$1.5m**

earned by AnnieCannons graduates to date

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**20+**

partnerships with private corporations to provide paid work.

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Development of notable student software programs to include Survivors.io, Mom to Mom, TRO, and Referral.

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AnnieCannons is currently committed to collecting data on the number of individuals reached, overall satisfaction, and average portfolio size on graduation.

*(<https://anniecannons.com/>) (L. Hackney, personal communication, 2021)*



# Survivor Ventures

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Established in 2018, Survivor Ventures aims to provide economic empowerment to survivors of human trafficking by providing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Restore spoke with the Survivors to Entrepreneurs program director, Olivia Reposa, for this report.

- **Rental Assistance:** Participants can access up to twelve months of housing subsidies to assist in the transition to affordable housing.
- **Trauma-Informed Employment:** Participants are placed in trauma-informed work environments at partnering small businesses related to their fields of interest.
- **Survivors to Entrepreneurs:** Participants create a business plan and are connected to local entrepreneurial resources, accelerators, and incubators to gain access to resources necessary for entrepreneurship.

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26

survivors served

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20/26

were still employed  
after one year

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23/26

achieved housing stability

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6/26

incorporated businesses

*(SurvivorVentures.org) (O. Reposa, personal communication, 2021)*

# Green Worker Cooperatives

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Established in 2003, Green Worker Cooperatives and the Co-Op Academy work with aspiring worker cooperatives in New York City to help develop their ideas, raise capital, and establish flourishing cooperatives that allow equitable access to profit for all owners in the cooperative. Restore spoke with founder, Omar Freilla, for this report.

- **Co-Op Academy:** Intensive five-month-long training and support program that helps aspiring entrepreneurs develop governance, marketing, business models, decision-making models, and work plans for a successful worker-owned business.
- **Training by Skilled Experts:** Members of active cooperative businesses provide mentorship and training.
- **Legal Assistance:** To provide information on the legal formation and development of cooperative bylaws.
- **Peer-Support Network:** For business coaching and workshops beyond graduation.

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≈50 cooperatives served

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50% completion rate of  
Co-Op Academy

*(<https://www.greenworker.coop/>) (O. Freilla, personal communication, 2021)*

# New York Women's Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 2002, the New York Women's Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to economically empowering women and minorities by assisting them to start and grow businesses, enabling them to build economic independence through business ownership. The Women's Chamber is also an advocate of gender parity and economic justice, actively working in partnership with the City and State to level the playing field through the creation of fair and inclusive business opportunities. Restore spoke with President and CEO, Quenia Abreu, for this report.

- **Small Business Grants:** Provides access to grant funding to qualifying small businesses.
- **Membership Model:** Provides networking and business development assistance to entrepreneurs.
- **Minorities and Women's Business Enterprise Center (WMBE):** Assists entrepreneurs with New York City and New York State certifications as minority/women-owned businesses, increasing their capacity not only to compete for City and State contracts, but to grow their businesses. ContractHer, within this area of service, is an intensive business growth accelerator program designed to assist women to compete for government and private contracts.
- **Women's Microenterprise Institute:** The Institute provides bilingual microenterprise development services, best practices, hands-on business training, workshops and seminars, business coaching, assistance with business startup, planning, management and development, marketing and advertising, financing and financial literacy, technology and social media, work space, mentoring and networking, to disadvantaged aspiring, start-up, and existent women and minority entrepreneurs in NYC.

1,200-1,500

are served through the New York Women's Chamber of Commerce Programs every year

300+

entrepreneurs receive M/WBE certification guidance each year

700+

microentrepreneurs receive intensive business counseling services.

500+

receive assistance in accessing funding

(<https://www.nywcc.org/>) (Q. Abreu, personal communication, 2021)

# Rising Tide Capital

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Based in Jersey City, New Jersey, Rising Tide Capital provides social capital and business management education to low to moderate-income entrepreneurs in New Jersey and beyond. Restore interviewed the Managing Director of Strategic Partnerships, Samira Cook Gaines, for this report.

- **Community Business Academy:** Twelve-week program in business management that focuses on experiential learning for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- **Business Acceleration Services:** Ninety-day mentorship and coaching program to assist in new business launches and development.
- **Credit to Capital Program:** Graduates from BAS receive assistance in packaging loan applications and applying for small business support programs.
- **New Programs:** Recently launched survivor entrepreneurship program and initiative to share the Rising Tide Capital business model with partner organizations across the United States.

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**97**  
businesses started

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**219**  
new jobs created

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**398**  
businesses strengthened

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**305**  
businesses expanded

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**84%**  
increase in individual  
business sales

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**62%**  
increase in average  
household income

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**60%**  
decrease in the use of public  
assistance programs

*(RisingTideCapital.org) (Rising Tides Capital, 2021) (S. Cook Gaines, personal communication, 2021)*

# Futures Without Violence

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For more than 30 years, Futures Without Violence has worked to help survivors of trafficking overcome barriers to healing and economic freedom through advocacy, career exploration programs, access to sustainable wages, and training opportunities. We spoke with the Economic Justice and Workforce Initiatives Program Director, Sarah Gonzalez Bocinski, for this report.

- **Leadership and Professional Development:** Continuing education available online to organizations working to support trafficking survivors.
- **Collaborative Response to Human Trafficking:** Community resources, education, and events to promote a collaborative response to human trafficking.
- **Project Catalyst:** Promotes state-wide advocacy for policy and systems changes, training and technical assistance on trauma-informed practices, and ongoing integration of human trafficking response in health care delivery.

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11

local victim service/workforce development/employer collaborations

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5,200

providers received responsive online tools and training working to address violence and trauma

*(FuturesWithoutViolence.org) (S. Gonzalez, personal communication, 2021)*

# Restore NYC

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Established in 2009, Restore has pioneered housing and economic-empowerment solutions by using a survivor-centered approach to help individuals access safe housing and work opportunities. Sandra Diaz, Director of Economic Empowerment, represented Restore for this report.

- **Client Services:** Provides counseling, case management, and resource coordination to survivors.
- **Housing:** Connects survivors with emergency housing, transitional housing, and independent living.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Provides job-readiness training, job placement and retention, and entrepreneurship training and incubation services to survivors.
- **Pitch Night:** Hosted in July 2020, pitch night gave 28 graduates of the Restore-NYU entrepreneurship training initiative (ELab) the opportunity to apply to receive seed grants for their small businesses.

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9

grants awarded through private donations in amounts ranging from \$1,500-\$50,000.

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5

new survivor-owned ventures generating income in 2021

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54%

of ELab graduates are likely to be employed vs. 37% of all trafficking survivors

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2x

higher earnings reported by ELab graduates

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In the future, Restore is committed to tracking the increase in annualized earnings, percent advancement at work, and number of businesses started after incubator programs.

*(Podreciks & Hu, 2020) (S. Diaz, personal communication, 2021)*

## Survivor Entrepreneurship

Restore worked with the organizations listed in this report to summarize best practices and innovative solutions to address barriers faced by survivor entrepreneurs. The insights provided here are to be used as best practices for individuals and organizations looking to establish similar programs.

### Access to Capital

Raising capital is a challenge for all new entrepreneurs, but fundraising poses a unique challenge for survivor entrepreneurs who often lack a credit history or have a criminal record, and therefore do not qualify for many small business loans. The following innovative fundraising models may prove helpful as organizations look to support survivor entrepreneurs' access to capital.

Historically, under-resourced populations in Africa, Bangladesh, and Latin America, have used Rotating Savings and Credits Associations, otherwise known as "merry-go-round savings club" models to source community

funds (Shamseya, 2021) (Aizenman, 2017). This funding model provides cash funds, creates networking and social connections, and helps members with rent, basic necessities, and seed money for new businesses (Shamseya, 2021) (Aizenman, 2017).

Funding may also be secured through private donations and seed grants. Many organizations interviewed for this report receive funding through state, federal, and private donations and redistribute that funding in the form of grants and direct cash distributions to survivors. Others took a unique approach to connect survivor entrepreneurs directly with investors. For example, in June 2020, Restore NYC hosted a Pitch Night where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas directly to private investors and received grants ranging from \$1,500-\$50,000 to support their small businesses (S. Diaz, private communication, 2021). Others use non-extractive financing models, paid client work experiences, and employment placement to provide survivors with immediate access to capital. For examples of these unique models, see Defy Ventures, AnnieCannons, and Survivor Ventures.



## Technical Training and Digital Literacy

Digital literacy can serve as a barrier to survivors seeking high-income jobs in the tech industry or related fields. Organizations such as Immigrants Rising teach basic digital literacy skills while organizations such as AnnieCannons provide the comprehensive technical training and work experience required to enter the tech industry.

## Elevating Survivor Voices

*“There are so many human trafficking organizations out here that have no survivor voices at all on their team.”*

*Olivia Reposa, Program Director - Survivor Ventures*

Survivor-led organizations like Survivor Ventures, FreeFrom, Avery Center, Runaway Girl Inc., Elevate Academy, the Switch, Sungate Foundation, the Formation Project and others promote economic empowerment and opportunity for fellow survivors. Non-survivor-led organizations can elevate survivor voices by supporting the establishment of survivor-owned businesses and partnering with survivor-owned and operated organizations.

## Cooperative Business Models

Cooperative business models offer a solution for survivors seeking non-traditional pathways to economic empowerment through entrepreneurship. Cooperative business models, also known as worker-owned businesses, are groups of two or more individuals who share equal ownership and decision-making power in a business (O. Freilla, personal communication, 2021). Members work together to determine the business model, work plan, operations, marketing, and profit share.

Examples of organizations that promote cooperative business models include Green Worker Cooperatives Co-Op Academy and the Center for Family Life’s Cooperative Development Program. Both organizations work with community members to establish worker-owned cooperative businesses with a special focus on the green economy, BIPOC business ownership, economic development, and social justice (O. Freilla, personal communication, 2021).

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## Insights on Digital Literacy Building

- Make online resources accessible via mobile devices so that survivors can access resources without access to a computer.
- Create easy-to-use technology with user-friendly interfaces.
- Provide training on basic technology skills needed for the workforce.

*(I. Perez, personal communication, 2021)*

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## Insights on Technical Skill Acquisition

- Provide phased training programs that allow survivors to experience success and gain confidence while upskilling to learn technical concepts.
- Relate new concepts to survivors’ lived experience to enhance skill acquisition and promote innovative business ideas.
- Help survivors build their portfolio with paid work opportunities for easier entry into technical fields.

*(L. Hackney, personal communication, 2021)*

Local and state governments may choose to invest in cooperative businesses as a means to create jobs and bolster local economies. In 2015, New York State approved a Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative to allocate state funding to worker cooperatives in the boroughs as a means to address income inequality (NYC Small Business Services, 2015). Other state governments may consider New York's model as a means to support cooperative development in their local communities.

## **Additional Recommendations**

In preparation for this report, organizations were asked to consider additional policy, systemic, and organizational changes that would lead to improved outcomes for survivor entrepreneurs.

**Establish a cohesive ecosystem of organizations to support survivor entrepreneurs.**

**Provide business planning and systems education training to survivors.**

**Address attrition with flexible, trauma-informed programs.**

**Advocate for policy change and equality opportunity, especially work authorization for undocumented immigrants, immigration policy reform, and criminal record expungement.**

**Create partnerships with small, privately owned businesses and solo entrepreneurs to make qualified mentor matches, and provide entrepreneurship apprenticeships.**

**Provide resources in multiple languages and hire on-staff interpreters who can support survivor entrepreneurs in their first language.**

## Survivor Entrepreneurship Works

For survivors of trafficking, entrepreneurship offers an accessible pathway to economic freedom. Entrepreneurship does not require work authorization and it allows survivors to capitalize on existing skills and interests to create income streams. Impact metrics, program data, and survivor expressed needs and desires provide valuable insight into the efficacy of survivor entrepreneurship programs.

### Fields of Interest

Survivors self-report a high degree of interest in entrepreneurship in a range of industries. According to Restore NYC's 2020 Impact Data, **79% of survivors who go through their programs report an interest in entrepreneurship.** As stated by Samira Cook Gaines of Rising Tide Capital, "it's important to know that folks who are under-resourced aren't at a deficit for creative ideas." The twelve organizations identified in this report indicate that survivors have successfully started businesses in both high and low barrier-to-entry fields, including those listed below.

**Accommodations. Aesthetics. Consulting.**  
**Creative Entrepreneurship. Editing.**  
**Finance. Food Service. Grant Writing.**  
**Hairdressing. Makeup Artistry. Marketing.**  
**Professional Services. Real Estate**  
**Licensing. Retail and Fashion Services.**  
**Software Application Development.**  
**Translation Services. Website Design and**  
**Development. Yoga and Fitness Instruction.**

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# 79%

of survivors who go through Restore's programs report an interest in entrepreneurship.

# Outcome & Impact Data Highlights

The twelve organizations included in this report all carefully measure outcome and impact data to ensure the efficacy of their survivor entrepreneurship programs. Restore NYC looks to this data to assess the effectiveness of entrepreneurship as a means to economic empowerment for survivors.

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88%

of participants achieved  
housing stability

*(Survivor Ventures, 2020 Impact Metrics)*

84%

average increase in  
individual business sale

*(Rising Tide Capital, 2019 Impact Metrics)*

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66%

new family-owned  
business activity

*(UpTogether Impact Metrics)*

80%

of grant recipients started  
or scaled a business

*(Immigrants Rising Impact Metrics)*

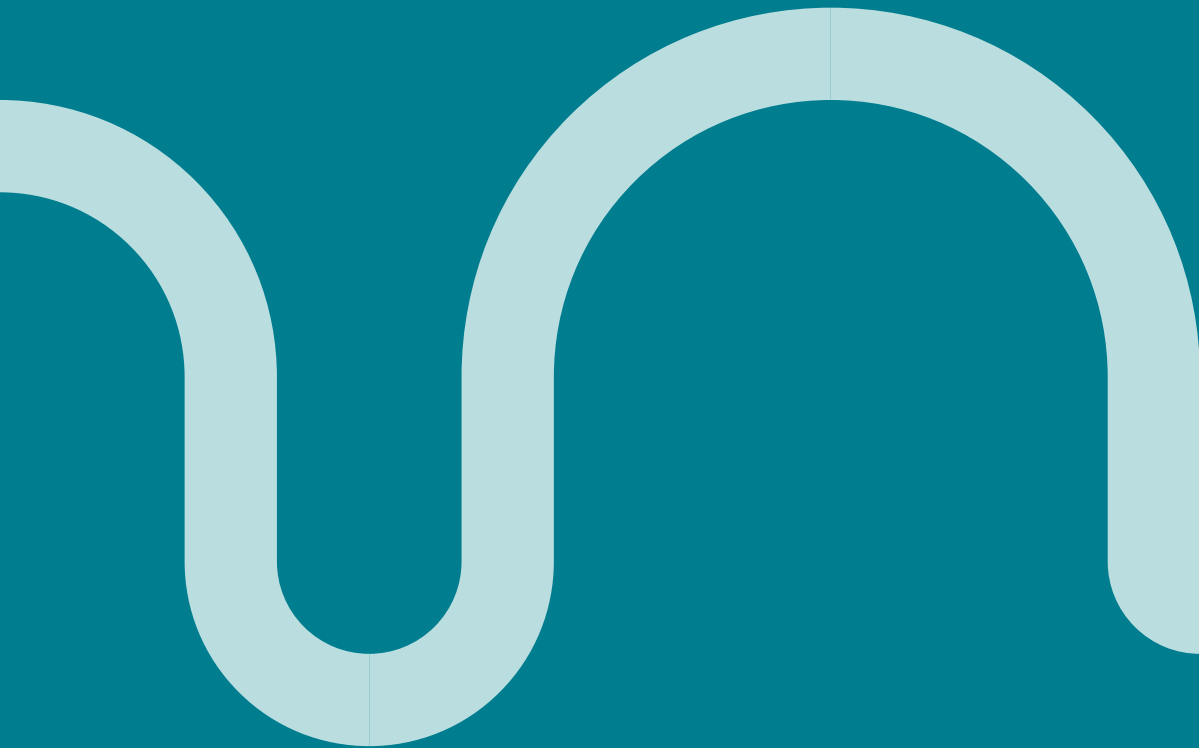
## Self-efficacy for entrepreneurship skills improved across all areas



## Self-efficacy for starting a new business improved across all areas



(Restore NYC)



# Foundations for the Future





# Foundations for the Future

Complex socioeconomic factors perpetuate the cycle of trafficking, leaving survivors without access to employment income and vulnerable to continued exploitation. Public and systemic policy changes are required to provide a long-term solution. In the meantime, entrepreneurship offers the opportunity for survivors to secure reliable income streams.

In this section, we provide suggestions for industries, corporations, and policymakers to consider to help strengthen the necessary foundations that survivors need in order to achieve true freedom from exploitation.

## Call to Corporate: If you can't hire, invest.

### **In Certifications**

- In business startup capital
- In certifications
- In nonprofit organizations

### **In Business Startup Capital**

- Formation / Setup
- Grants
- Equity Investments

## Call to Communities: Become sponsors.

- Form cooperatives and source financing to sponsor projects at a local level for returns that beat inflation while doing good as they strengthen communities.
- Buy or contract from survivor-owned businesses.

## Call to the Industry: Provide skill-building opportunities.

**Create programs for survivors that give them access to learning skills necessary to meet the needs of today's employers.**

**Provide pro-bono services and resources to survivor-owned businesses.**

### **Nontraditional paths to certifications in:**

- Paid Marketing
- Coding
- Copywriting
- UX/UI Design
- Graphic Design

### **Pro-bono Services:**

- Incorporation
- Legal
- Accounting
- Website development
- Digital marketing

### **Launch a Survivor's Strengths Survey**

- Map skills and interests
- Match individuals with a path that follows their passions

### **Pro-bono Resources**

- Computers
- Internet access
- Office space

## Call to Educators: Provide the necessary tools for success.

Increase access to livable wage careers through funded certification programs.

Provide training in the area of trauma and how it affects the brain for those in workforce development systems.

# Additional Recommendations for Sustainable Change

Policymakers, organizations, and communities need to come together to make impactful changes that will lead to positive outcomes for survivors of human trafficking.

## **Reporting**

- Advocates, lawyers, attorneys, and federal agents to assist survivors in applying for T-Visas and Continued Presence.
- Restrict federal grants to law enforcement to require that recipient law enforcement agencies collect and report comprehensive data on trafficking survivors.

## **Expanding Access to Approvals**

- Extend authorization to file continued presence applications beyond just federal agents.
- Provide additional funding for adjudicators who process T-Visa applications as a means to fill department vacancies, increase retention, and reduce processing time.

## **Expanding Business Loans**

- Updating the FAST program loan requirements so that survivors do not need to have a credit score but may instead apply with a sponsor as a checkpoint.
- Remove criminal history as a factor in deciding whether an individual or small business should receive funding.

Survivors face unique challenges that impact their ability to see a positive pathway forward for themselves. Additionally, barriers such as migration status, criminal records, skill and experience gaps, and the need for immediate funds make it difficult for survivors to secure sustainable and safe employment. Corporations, communities, policymakers, and governments have a role to play in removing barriers to employment for survivors of trafficking. Until then, entrepreneurship offers an attainable path toward economic freedom.

Our leaders note that **programs can be successful when they are survivor-centered, trauma-informed, community-based, and provide accessible resources.** Based on available impact data and survivor-reported outcomes, we are excited about the potential opportunities entrepreneurship may afford. The recommendations in this report are meant to assist individuals and organizations in establishing survivor entrepreneurship programs in their communities while promoting the broader systemic change in order to provide a brighter future for survivors of human trafficking.



# Meet the Leaders



**Andrew Glazier**  
CEO  
Defy Ventures

Andrew Glazier is the CEO and President of Defy Ventures, a national non-profit focused on entrepreneurship, employment, and personal development for currently and formerly incarcerated men, women, and young adults. Defy Ventures has enrolled more than 6,000 Entrepreneurs in Training in prison and post-release programming, engaged more than 6,300 volunteers and supported the launch of more than 140 businesses. Defy's graduates have a one-year recidivism rate of less than 10%, compared to the national one-year rate of 30%. Defy offers programming through a network of chapters and licensed affiliates across 8 states. More information about Defy Ventures can be found at [www.defyventures.org](http://www.defyventures.org) or by emailing [info@defyventures.org](mailto:info@defyventures.org).

*Andrew holds a B.A from Pomona College and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.*

*"There's a transformative power to entrepreneurship that's really valuable."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Cynthia Luvlee**  
Executive Director  
Shyne

Cynthia Luvlee, Founder and Executive Director of Shyne, has over twenty years of experience as a Nonprofit Startup Specialist. Her passion is creating and launching innovative social change organizations. In 2018, after a loved one became the victim of sexual assault, Cynthia shifted her attention to developing solutions for addressing sexual abuse and predation against women. Shyne is dedicated to survivor's economic independence through small business development and entrepreneurship. She believes addressing economic equity offers the greatest hope for survivors to lead the way in creating systemic and social impact reform.

Cynthia earned a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from San Diego State University and received her Holistic Health License through Body Mind College. She is certified in Grassroots Leadership Development as an Alumni of The Goldin Institute of Chicago. Cynthia has also received the Making a Difference for Women's Award from Soroptimist International. Cynthia recently completed her six year term with the Board of Directors for Neighborhood House Association, one of the largest social service agencies in San Diego County.

*"My own research led me to discover that I didn't see a lot of data on survivor strengths. It's a lot of victim identification and vulnerability research, and how to identify survivors. And so we started to collect data on survivors' character strengths."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Iliana Perez**  
**Director of Research &  
Entrepreneurship**  
**Immigrants Rising**

Iliana G. Perez, Ph.D. is the Director of Research & Entrepreneurship at Immigrants Rising, where she oversees the research and evaluation agenda of the organization, as well as the entrepreneurship programming. In this role, she spearheaded the creation and launch of the #UndocuHustle Learning Hub ([undocuhustle.org](http://undocuhustle.org)), an interactive toolkit that helps immigrants, regardless of status, learn about income generation through entrepreneurship. In 2021, Iliana began leading the implementation of the SEED Initiative, a \$5.4 million grant from the state of California that will expand Immigrants Rising's entrepreneurship work across the state. Iliana immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico alongside her mother, father, and younger brother at the age of eight. She grew up in the California Central Valley and navigated the educational system as an undocumented student for 18 years until she became a DACA recipient in 2013.

Iliana holds a B.A. in Mathematics from Fresno State, an M.A. in Economics from Claremont Graduate University, and a Ph.D. in Education Policy, Evaluation, and Reform, also from Claremont Graduate University.

*"Barriers to employment limit the ability of an immigrant to generate higher income without work authorization or social security number. Entrepreneurship allows individuals to break those barriers and have better opportunities to increase their incomes."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Jean Bruggeman, Esq.**  
Executive Director  
Freedom Network USA

Jean Bruggeman is the Executive Director of Freedom Network USA (FNUSA), the nation's largest alliance of advocates working with survivors of all forms of human trafficking in the US. FNUSA uses a human rights-based approach to ensure that trafficked persons have access to justice, safety, and opportunity through coalition-building, training and technical assistance, and policy advocacy. Jean served as a Human Trafficking Fellow with the Office for Victims of Crime within the US Department of Justice from 2012-2015. She provided leadership in the development of the Federal Strategic Action Plan for Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, the first OVC Human Trafficking Survivor Forum, and the OVC video series, "The Faces of Human Trafficking." Jean has over 20 years of victim services experience and expertise in nonprofit management, language access, immigration, human trafficking, and domestic violence. She has developed comprehensive legal and social services programs for survivors, provided direct legal representation to survivors, authored training resources, and developed an interpreter service to ensure access to legal services in the District of Columbia.

She is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center and Bryn Mawr College, and is a member of the DC and Maryland (inactive) bar associations.

*"It's important to understand the ways we systematically create trafficking through an immigration system which makes it hard for workers and protects employers."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Jesús Gerena**  
CEO  
UpTogether

Jesús Gerena is the CEO of UpTogether, an antiracist change organization that trusts and invests in low-income families, allowing them to move out of poverty. Under Jesús's leadership, UpTogether has quadrupled its revenue, doubled in staff, and expanded its work to all 50 states through the adoption of its strength-based approach and technology platform, UpTogether Community.

Prior to joining UpTogether in 2010, Jesús worked for the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF), where he served as Deputy Director and worked on the Youth First project that helped lay the groundwork for a proposed \$250 million urban development project. In 2008, the HSTF team organized and designed a youth-led comprehensive Civics curriculum in Boston Public Schools.

Jesús has held numerous board leadership positions across New England and is also a co-founder of the Community Fellows Program at the Institute for Nonprofit Practice. He currently serves on advisory groups for the Aspen Institute and the Kresge Foundation. Jesús is an established speaker and has presented at conferences and gatherings across the United States, most notably as a featured speaker at the 2011 TEDx Cambridge conference. In 2015, the Boston-based Barr Foundation awarded Jesús a Barr Fellowship for his contributions to the city and his potential to drive positive change. Recently, the Schwab Foundation named Jesús as a 2020 Social Innovator of the Year for leading UpTogether's work supporting tens of thousands of families across the US during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*"Most programs and caseworkers that work with individuals who are destabilized have a safety net mentality that addresses people in a paternalistic way. Every step of the way, we're telling families, I trust that you know the best way out for you." - Tedxcambridge, 2011*

# Meet the Leaders



**Kofi Kenyatta**  
Director of Policy  
and Practice  
UpTogether

Kofi Kenyatta is the Director of Policy and Practice at UpTogether. He joined UpTogether in 2014 and led the launch of the Detroit demonstration project. His professional tenure includes positions with various non-profit organizations focused on family development, housing access, and related quality of life issues. Prior to joining UpTogether, he served as Director of Compliance and lead facilitator for The 180 Program. Previously, Kofi served on the Executive Board of the 13th Congressional District and has worked as a political consultant on national, state, and local campaigns. Kofi is a graduate of Hampton University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Business Management.

*"We call ourselves a learning organization because our members are the experts. We learn from them and we utilize our position of privilege to work with our philanthropic partners and government partners to elevate what we're learning on the ground in advocating that they invest directly in the people."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Laura Hackney**  
CEO & Co-Founder  
AnnieCannons

Laura Hackney is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer at AnnieCannons. Laura is a full-stack software engineer and oversees the coding training program and software product development teams. Prior to AnnieCannons, Laura managed the Program on Human Rights at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute. She also worked as the Senior Research Associate for Stanford's Anti-Trafficking Project in the Mekong Sub-Region and was a Program Associate for the Freeman Spogli Institute's International Policy Implementation Lab.

Laura is passionate about the intersections of human rights, technology, and education. She works with the Human Trafficking Task Force within the San Francisco Police Department's Special Victims Unit, serves on Alameda County's AC United Steering Committee, and supports the local Bay Area anti-trafficking groups.

*"Ultimately, our goal is to help people become software engineers and be able to have meaningful careers."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Olivia Reposa**  
Survivors to Entrepreneurs  
Program Director  
Survivors Ventures

Olivia Reposa is the Survivors to Entrepreneurs Program Director at Survivor Ventures. She works with trafficking survivors to meet their unique personal and professional goals while maintaining a productive and efficient work environment for Survivor Ventures' small business partners. Founder and CEO of Surviving Change, Olivia has a decade of entrepreneurial experience in small business management and customer service positions, as well as informally during her victimization.

Olivia is a human trafficking survivor who is no stranger to the systemic barriers that stand in the way of recovery. She was arrested on many occasions for crimes connected to her victimization. Both during and after her release from jail, Olivia worked with local, state, and federal authorities to prosecute her traffickers. In her free time, she continues to bravely advocate for criminal record relief for Virginia-based trafficking survivors.

She holds a degree from Cape Cod Community College and enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter.

*"We are not here to help survivors. We're here to defeat barriers so that survivors can help themselves."*



# Meet the Leaders



## Omar Freilla

Founder, Green Worker  
Cooperatives

Cooperative Development  
Consultant & Cofounder,  
Collective Diaspora

Omar Freilla is a serial trailblazer, social entrepreneur, and movement builder with a passion for building structures for community self-determination and regenerative economies. His work is grounded in his experience growing up in the South Bronx, a child of Dominican immigrants, within a network of community organizers. He founded Green Worker Cooperatives, the oldest Black-led worker cooperative development organization in the US. He has pioneered multiple approaches to cooperative development that have resulted in New York City now having the largest concentration of worker cooperatives in the US. He is the creator of the Co-op Academy, the first business accelerator for worker cooperatives in the US. His latest initiative is Collective Diaspora, a new global network of Black cooperatives and Black-led cooperative support organizations from across the African diaspora.

Omar has over 18 years of experience developing worker cooperatives and almost as many years as an organizer challenging environmental racism, classism, and sexism. He has been part of the leadership of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance; Sustainable South Bronx; US Federation of Worker Cooperatives; Democracy At Work Institute; NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives; and the Story of Stuff Project. He currently serves on the Mayor of New York City's Environmental Justice Advisory Board and New York State's Just Transition Working Group. He has been a fellow of the Open Society Institute (now Open Society Foundations); Environmental Leadership Program; and the Democracy At Work Institute. He co-curated the NYC portion of the BMW Guggenheim Lab, a project of the Guggenheim Museum. His writings have appeared in numerous books, blogs, and articles. He also appears in numerous documentaries, including Leonardo DiCaprio's environmental documentary "The 11th Hour."

*"We're helping people to create businesses that can lift people out of poverty by creating quality jobs and allowing workers to be owners of the business themselves."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Quenia Abreu**  
**President & CEO**  
**New York Women's**  
**Chamber of Commerce**

Quenia Abreu, together with a group of businesswomen and community leaders, founded the New York Women's Chamber of Commerce (NYWCC) where she is now President and CEO. Inspired by women entrepreneurs who wanted more than just networking from a membership organization, the NYWCC became the first and only women's chamber of commerce in the City and State of New York. Today, with a membership of more than 2,000 and growing, the NYWCC has provided technical assistance, guidance, and training to more than 10,000 individuals, assisted with the creation of more than 3,500 new businesses, and aided entrepreneurs in accessing \$15 million in capital and \$30 millions in procurement contracts. The organization has also assisted more than 300 entrepreneurs in applying for M/WBE certification.

A dynamic young Latino woman, born in the Dominican Republic and raised in New York City, Quenia has always championed the professional and business development of women and minorities. She previously held the position of Director at the Queens Economic Development Corporation and the Hunts Point Economic Development Women's Business Centers funded by the US Small Business Administration (SBA). She also worked for Columbia University, where she started as an office assistant and later became the Associate Director of Recruiting and Placement, and the youngest Latina female executive in the history of the institution.

Quenia holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marketing and International Trade from the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York, and is a graduate of the Executive Education Programs at the Chicago Graduate School of Business.

*"If we were to invest more into helping women become economically independent and successful as entrepreneurs, then they could pay for their own housing, food, and decide where to live or send their kids to school. If we really want to help women become self-sufficient and economically independent, that's where we need to put more money."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Samira Cook Gaines**  
**Managing Director of**  
**Strategic Partnerships**  
**Rising Tide Capital**

Samira Cook Gaines is the Managing Director of Strategic Partnerships for Rising Tide Capital (RTC). Prior to her new role, Samira served as the Economic Development Manager for Takoma Park, Maryland, where she guided the growth and development of local community businesses in the only designated Opportunity Zone in Montgomery County. Samira was the Founding Director of the Washington, DC Women's Business Center (DC WBC), which supports women entrepreneurs through training, coaching, and mentoring. Under Samira's direction, the DC WBC assisted over 1000 women in achieving their business goals. She previously served as the Chief of Economic Empowerment for the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) where she provided programmatic leadership in the areas of wealth creation and asset building.

In honor of her work with small businesses, Samira was selected as a White House Champion for Change in the area of entrepreneurship mentoring under the Obama Administration. An entrepreneur first, Samira is the President of Purposeful World Strategies, which helps cities and countries identify, incubate, and ignite their entrepreneurs and small business owners by creating structures for inclusive entrepreneurship and small business support.

A native New Jerseyan, Samira received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and her MPA from The George Washington University in Washington, DC.

*"We're hoping to give folks a healthy seed to plant in the soil of their own communities so when it blossoms it looks like their community, feels like their community, and is born of their community."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Sandra Diaz**

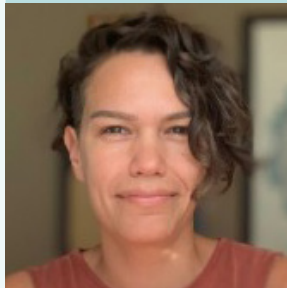
**Director of  
Economic Empowerment  
Restore NYC**

Sandra Diaz was first connected with Restore NYC when seeking help for a labor-trafficked woman that she met in her local church. She now leads Restore's Economic Empowerment team, providing job readiness training, job placement and retention, and entrepreneurship training and incubation services to survivors of trafficking. Prior to joining Restore, Sandra was a marketing executive at L'Oréal, Sears, Sara Lee, and Colgate Palmolive, as well as an independent innovation and strategy consultant. She also has over a decade of experience delivering job search and LinkedIn coaching to diverse individuals ranging from formerly homeless women to corporate professionals.

Sandra has an MBA degree from the Kellogg School of Management and an Industrial Engineering degree from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia. She is an avid learner, connector, and salsa dancer.

*"I think the biggest impact is seeing that confidence in the people who've participated."*

# Meet the Leaders



**Sarah Gonzalez**  
**Program Director**  
**Economic Justice and**  
**Workforce Initiatives**  
**Futures Without Violence**

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*"There's just no way to save your way out of poverty; it is an impossible equation. Survivors need real economic opportunities that can lead to financial security."*

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