

i-5 Grant Proposal Template

The Need:

According to the State of California Department of Justice, we are home to one of the highest rates of reported human trafficking in the nation. In 2018 alone 1,656 instances of human trafficking were reported to the state-run hotline. What's more, according to the U.S. Department of State, "...we and our allies and partners find ourselves confronting a crisis that has reached previously unimagined proportions. While urgency has always marked the fight against human trafficking, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic have magnified the need for all stakeholders to work together in the fight more than ever. We know that human traffickers prey upon the most vulnerable and look for opportunities to exploit them. Instability and lack of access to critical services caused by the pandemic mean that the number of people vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers is rapidly growing."

It is not hyperbolic to say that support services for human trafficking survivors has never been so essential.

In an article published by *The Hill* in 2019 the need for i-5's services is captured all too perfectly: "To date, most U.S. government funding and focus related to human trafficking has been on criminal justice and human services: prosecuting traffickers, identifying victims and providing emergency housing or immediate services. While these interventions are vital, many agencies serving victims lack the resources to help clients find long-term employment." (<https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/425041-jobs-must-be-part-of-the-solution-to-human-trafficking>)

All too often, individuals recovering from human trafficking are left without financial resources or traditional work experience. Some are strapped with a criminal history from the demands of a trafficker. This reality makes it extremely challenging to get a fair chance at employment, to gain access to professional and personal development skills, or to be able to build trust and healthy relationships. Without the prospect of gainful employment, human trafficking survivors are left with few viable options.

History and Mission:

In 2008, Brenda Wells experienced an awakening of sorts. Through the International Justice Mission, Brenda's attention was drawn to the issue of human trafficking. However, as an American working overseas, she was under a rather widespread misconception that trafficking was an issue pervasive only outside the United States. From 2008 to 2013, it was an issue that kept reappearing. "We were overseas with the military," Wells explains, "and human trafficking would show up in military PSAs." But when she returned to California, Brenda learned an entirely different side of the story. It was in 2013 that Brenda Wells attended an Orange County anti-trafficking event and the wheels were set in motion. Two years later, in 2015, Brenda launched i-5 Freedom Network – an organization borne from her passion for the cause and her professional experience.

As a corporate trainer, Brenda understood that the playing field for job opportunities is far from level. What's more, her experience in the hotel industry seemed an ideal launching point to help combat human trafficking and provide employment training for survivors. With an engaged Board and dedicated

team, i-5 has become an integral part of the healing process for human trafficking survivors throughout Orange County and the surrounding area.

The i-5 Freedom Network's mission is three-fold: 1) To empower survivors with life skills for a path forward and away from the life of human trafficking; 2) To equip the hospitality industry with tools to become heroes in the fight against human trafficking; and 3) To mobilize entire communities to join the fight to end human trafficking. We continue to develop and refine our programs to bring education, training, and action opportunities to combat human trafficking up and down the I-5 corridor in Southern California, providing access and advantage to survivors through workshops that increase their employability and their belief in themselves.

Organizational Programs:

Direct Survivor Support: Communication skills, self-confidence, and maintaining appropriate boundaries are common challenges for people emerging from trafficking. While counseling and therapeutic support are designed to address the emotional trauma of survival, former victims also need training and guidance that is focused on their unique barriers to potential employment. Our WAY2WORK (W2W) Program was designed to address this need by bringing critical "soft skills" to participants of the workshops. Participants learn how to make eye contact, engage in small talk, and manage stress and conflict. They also learn business etiquette and additional tools to stay focused on their future.

Hospitality Training: According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Traffickers often take advantage of the privacy and anonymity accessible through the hospitality industry. Hotels and motels can be especially attractive locations for all forms of trafficking; however, human trafficking also occurs at sporting events, theme parks, cruise ships, and many other areas in the tourism industry. Staff are not necessarily educated on how to recognize and report signs of trafficking."

Working with hospitality professionals, we have developed a training program tailored to their industry. Our toolkit includes department and associate training, supervisor and manager best practices for responding to trafficking, executive consulting to include labor trafficking and transparent supply chain compliance, and a hotel property risk assessment. Through our Hospitality Training Program, i-5 has provided the opportunity for trafficking survivors to speak directly with hotel and motel staff members, giving them firsthand accounts of how their training could save the life of a trafficking victim.

Community Awareness: Because human trafficking often takes place right under our noses, educating the community is an essential step in breaking the cycle. We work closely with our partner organizations and through our website to publicize ways that anyone can get involved in victim support. I-5 offers informed action opportunities through our virtual and in-person training events – teaching participants how to become advocates with tips like simply putting the Hotline number in their phone or asking if the hotel where they are staying has been trained to identify and report trafficking activity. We provide further training for anyone interested in being a professional mentor to survivors; many event facilitators are trained survivor graduates from our W2W Program. Our emphasis is that there is something everyone can do to disrupt the cycle of human trafficking.

Legislative Advocacy: I-5 has worked with elected officials from the city level to state senators on addressing human trafficking through legislation. We consulted on SB 970, which now requires hotel training on human trafficking. Additionally, we authored ordinances in San Clemente and Dana Point

that address trafficking in the illicit massage industry. I-5 staff researches proposed legislation locally and nationally to stay current on requirements, anticipate any unintended consequences, and make recommendations that are victim-centered and survivor-informed.

Current Program Focus:

The high recidivism rate in human trafficking is often attributed to survivors' lack of employability, sense of belonging, or confidence when reintegrating into conventional environments. Without a legitimate means of income, survivors are too often left to earn money by any means necessary. The i-5 Freedom Network's WAY2WORK (W2W) Program was built on the premise that survivors don't just need rescuing, they need resources.

I-5's W2W Program offers personal and professional development workshops tailored to the unique needs of people who have survived human trafficking. Based on Dale Carnegie's time-tested "How to Win Friends and Influence People" global training content, these skills workshops bring readiness resources to survivors who are also taking part in other support activities. This holistic approach helps to ensure that the path out of trafficking addresses both emotional and intellectual healing.

The Dale Carnegie content is designed to build confidence, comfort zones, communication skills, community, and connection – five keys to employability. Participants learn to effectively engage in new environments, build trust, and connect with their true value in order to maximize both existing and newly acquired job skills. The workshops are interactive and often use personal experiences to apply new skills. Therefore, facilitators aim to create a safe environment for participants to be open about the complexities and nuances of life after trafficking.

Program facilitators are certified Dale Carnegie corporate trainers, not simply i-5 volunteers. Their certification is a very rigorous and committed process; their dedication and insight is the key to our program's success. Working independently, Dale Carnegie corporate trainers earn thousands of dollars per seminar. Our facilitators are offering the same training to our clients at minimal or no cost to them.

The content and topics of W2W's 8-week workshops are as follows:

1. Create a Vision & Recall and Use Names
2. Build on Memory & Enhance Relationships
3. Put Stress in Perspective & Enhance Relationships to Motivate Others
4. Energize Communications & Make Our Ideas Clear
5. Disagree Agreeably & Gain Willing Communication
6. Manage Stress & Increase Flexibility
7. Build Others through Recognition & Inspire Others
8. Demonstrate Leadership, Celebrate Achievements & Renew Our Vision

Additionally, we frequently offer a 4-week mini-series consisting of 90-minute sessions on financial literacy and stress management techniques.

Please note: As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, we have adapted this program to run online. Participants commit to 8 sessions, 3 hours per session, in a private virtual space. In response to the COVID crisis, I-5 Freedom Network created a laptop lending library so that clients who have no access to a computer or have to share devices with family members can still participate.

Program Objectives and Goals:

The *goals* of the WAY2WORK Program are client-based and measured in every workshop series. Results are assessed regularly in order to inform future workshop content and delivery. The program's primary goals are as follows:

Goal 1: Participants will improve their interpersonal communication skills and feel an increased sense of confidence upon completion of the workshop series. Success is measured based on participant exit surveys and facilitator observations, along with follow up input from partner organizations.

Goal 2: Participants will tangibly increase their job readiness skills upon completion of the workshop series. Success is determined through pre- and post-workshop surveys as well as the ratio of those looking for work opportunities who also report feeling better prepared. Arriving (virtually) in acceptable attire, on time, and demonstrating accountability also demonstrates job readiness.

Goal 3: Participants will be more aware of potential job opportunities upon completion of the workshop series. Success is measured in part on the number of participants pursuing specific employment opportunities as well as those engaging actively in job searches.

W2W program *objectives* work to enable maximum programmatic success. They are the scaffolding on which the organization builds program activities. I-5's primary programmatic objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: I-5 Freedom Network will provide a platform for survivors and supporters to participate together in workshops in a simulated working environment. We aim to create a practice platform for mixed populations to learn more about each other and to build trust. To meet this objective, we want 25-50% of workshop series enrollees to be human trafficking service providers.

Objective 2: I-5 Freedom Network will partner with other survivor vocational programs to provide curriculum content, thereby incorporating hard skills training with our focus on "soft skills". We track the number of organizations that recommend and enroll their participants into our program. In the coming year, we seek to establish 2-3 new organizational partnerships that will expand our workshop network.

Objective 3: I-5 Freedom Network will prepare a minimum number of trafficking survivors for gainful employment on an ongoing basis. Meeting this objective means that each workshop enrolls 6 to 12 participants prior to start date; enrollees attend 8 weekly sessions per workshop series; the graduation/completion rate for every workshop series is 80%; and at least 80% of all participants respond favorably to content relevance and personal impact questions in post-workshop surveys.

Client Demographics:

W2W program participants hail from Orange, L.A., San Diego counties and locations throughout Southern California from which they can take part virtually. Participants are typically trafficking survivors transitioning from, or already completely disengaged from, their trafficking situation. Program

participants have traditionally trended more female than male, in large part because there are more women-only referring organizations. However, we proudly serve males, females, and those who identify as non-binary. The average participant age is 30. Ethnic backgrounds vary.

Community Partners:

In order to make our services available to the widest range of potential clients, i-5 collaborates with likeminded organizations for the provision of workshop services. For our “open enrollment” W2W workshops, we rely on partner organizations for marketing and outreach in order to ensure that their clients – trafficking survivors – understand the impact our workshops can have on their lives. Through those organizations, their clients are informed about upcoming W2W workshops and, in many cases, given referrals to take part. Referring organizations include Journey Out, Waymakers, Empower Her Network, and Survivor Leader Network.

Additionally, we partner with organizations looking to offer their clients “sole participant groups”. This type of collaboration allows individual organizations to deliver our workshop series directly and exclusively to their clients, often in conjunction with other therapy, training, and support services. The benefits of this type of partnership are manifold; we are proud to outsource our services in order to bolster the success rates of other organizations whose goal is to help survivors of human trafficking. Our impact is unquestionably stronger together. Sole participant group partners include Fundación de Sobrevivientes de Tráfico Humano, Shyne San Diego, iSanctuary, and Alabaster Jar Project.