

Office for Victims of Crime *Specialized Human Trafficking Assistance: Supporting Survivor Engagement in Anti-Trafficking Programming Grant Proposal*

Description of the Need

Sex trafficking of women and girls is a critical and persistent problem in Alabama and throughout the southeastern United States. Worthy2, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Auburn, Alabama, seeks to address the needs of women and girls affected by commercial sexual exploitation. In 2023 and 2024, Worthy2 identified 390 victims through outreach efforts, assisted in recovery and rehabilitation for 25 of them, and had 19 survivors complete programming and be completely freed (Worthy2, 2024). Sex trafficking is a form of modern slavery in which individuals are coerced, deceived, or forced into commercial sex acts. Federal law defines any commercial sexual exploitation of minors as trafficking, regardless of coercion (Department of Homeland Security, 2025).

Human trafficking has been reported in every American state and territory, including Alabama, and often remains hidden due to fear, stigma, and lack of resources for victims (Department of Homeland Security, 2025). Despite its hidden nature, available data demonstrates that trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. In the United States, more than 70% of identified trafficking victims are female, and the average age at which victims enter sex trafficking is between 12 and 14 years old (Zipdo, 2026). These figures highlight the vulnerability of adolescent girls and young women.

The southeastern United States is particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to transportation corridors, tourism, poverty, and rural isolation. These factors create environments in which traffickers can operate with virtually undetected while victims have fewer opportunities to seek help. The region's mixture of rural and urban communities can also limit access to services, leaving victims without safe housing, trauma-informed care, or legal advocacy. Alabama experiences significant levels of human trafficking relative to its population size. Since 2007, the National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified at least 927 human trafficking cases and nearly 2,000 victims in Alabama. In 2024 alone, the hotline documented more than 100 trafficking cases in the state, demonstrating that trafficking remains an ongoing concern. Most identified victims in Alabama are female, reflecting national trends in sex trafficking. Survivors contacting the hotline frequently request emergency shelter, service referrals, and crisis assistance, indicating a significant disparity in available resources for victims seeking safety and recovery (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2026). Despite the demonstrated need, Alabama continues to face significant gaps in services for trafficking survivors. Many communities lack specialized programs that address the complex trauma experienced by victims; therefore, Worthy2 intends to create a new Survivor Leadership Initiative.

The Worthy2 Survivor Leadership Initiative is a new project designed to empower survivors of sex trafficking to become leaders, advocates, and decision-makers within the organization and the broader community. This project will provide structured opportunities for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation to develop leadership skills, contribute to program development, and participate in community education and advocacy efforts. Survivors possess

critical lived experience that can improve service delivery, strengthen prevention strategies, and enhance community awareness. The Survivor Leadership Initiative will ensure that women and girls who have experienced exploitation are meaningfully involved in shaping policies and services that affect them.

The project will serve both adult (ages 18+) and adolescent (ages 14-17) survivors of trafficking across Alabama. Participants will receive mentorship, leadership training, and opportunities to engage in advocacy, peer support, and program development.

Project Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Empower survivors through leadership development.

Objective 1.1 - Provide structured leadership training for at least 10 survivors annually, including communication skills, advocacy training, and professional development, with the outcome of at least 7 survivors participate in all trainings.

Objective 1.2 - Support survivors in developing individualized leadership plans that identify personal goals, strengths, and career pathways, with the outcome that every participant creates a plan they can practically follow.

Objective 1.3 - Provide support services to reduce barriers to participation, with the outcome that at least 50% of the survivors who seek help complete the training program.

Goal 2: Increase survivor participation in organizational decision-making.

Objective 2.1 - Establish a Survivor Advisory Council composed of program participants to provide input on services and policies, with the outcome that the Council will have at least 5 survivors as official members.

Objective 2.2 - Include survivor representatives in at least three organizational planning meetings annually, with the outcome that at least 70% of survivors who participate reporting that they feel as though their voices matter.

Objective 2.3 - Integrate survivor feedback into program design and evaluation, with the outcome that at least 70% of survivors report that they feel as though their voices matter.

Goal 3: Strengthen community awareness and prevention.

Objective 3.1 - Train survivors to serve as peer educators and community speakers, with the outcome that, of those who complete leadership trainings, 80% feel confident in their abilities to serve as effective communicators.

Objective 3.2 - Conduct at least 5 survivor-led awareness presentations annually, with the outcome that presentation attendees leave feeling informed about the issue of human trafficking in their communities.

Objective 3.3 - Develop survivor-informed educational materials for schools and community organizations, with the outcome that at least one survivor-informed educational presentation will be completed and ready for utilization.

Program Design and Implementation

The Survivor Leadership Initiative will operate as a structured, trauma-informed program lasting approximately 9-12 months per participant cohort. The program will include four core components:

1. Leadership Training: Participants will complete a series of workshops covering leadership development, public speaking, advocacy skills, professional development, self-care, and resilience. Training will be delivered by qualified staff and community partners.

2. Mentorship: Each participant will be paired with a trained mentor, which may include experienced survivors, community professionals, and Worthy2 staff. Mentors will provide guidance on leadership goals and personal development.

3. Survivor Advisory Council: Participants who complete the training program will be eligible to serve on the Survivor Advisory Council. The council will provide input on services, identify emerging needs, recommend improvements, and assist with program evaluation. This framework ensures that survivors' voices remain central to organizational planning.

4. Community Engagement: Participants will have opportunities to engage in public education events, school presentations, professional trainings, and awareness campaigns. Survivors will participate voluntarily and will receive preparation and support before public engagements.

All program activities will follow trauma-informed principles, including emotional safety, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. Worthy2 staff will receive specialized training to ensure safe and supportive program delivery.

Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: Program Development (Months 1-3)

- Develop curriculum
- Recruit participants
- Train mentors
- Establish Survivor Advisory Council framework

Phase 2: Program Launch (Months 4-12)

- Conduct leadership workshops
- Begin mentorship activities
- Launch Survivor Advisory Council
- Initiate community presentations

Phase 3: Evaluation and Expansion (ongoing)

- Collect participant feedback quarterly through surveys
- Evaluate outcomes biannually based on survivor participation, program effectiveness, and budget alliance
- Refine program structure through biannual discussions with survivor participants
- Expand participation based on feedback from survivors, effectiveness of outreach efforts, and development of other organizational programming

Capabilities and Competencies

Worthy2 has established infrastructure and partnerships that position it well to successfully implement the Survivor Leadership Initiative. Worthy2 maintains a strong and committed volunteer network that supports outreach, education, and survivor services. Volunteers assist with event coordination, administrative support, and outreach activities. Additionally, many volunteers have received training in trauma-informed care and victim

support. These volunteers are supported and coordinated through joint efforts by the organization's founder, Kathryn Guthrie, and executive director, Sara Riesing (Worthy2, 2024). Kathryn and Sara will serve as survivor leadership coordinator and program manager, respectively, throughout the Survivor Leadership Initiative.

Worthy2 also already collaborates with local professionals and agencies that support trafficking survivors, including case managers and social workers, legal advocates, and medical providers; these partnerships ensure that program participants have access to comprehensive services. Furthermore, Worthy2 maintains working relationships with local and regional law enforcement agencies to support victim identification and referrals. These partnerships help ensure that survivors receive services quickly and safely (Worthy2, 2024).

In terms of overall organizational experience, Worthy2 has experience providing outreach to at-risk populations, survivor support services, community education programs, and prevention programming for both civilians and law enforcement officials. This foundation provides the administrative and programmatic capacity necessary to successfully implement the Survivor Leadership Initiative (Worthy2, 2024).

Worthy2 staff and volunteers will provide MOUs stating that they understand and will participate in activities funded by this grant. Community partners such as local businesses, professionals, and law enforcement officials will provide LOIs.

Budget

Worthy2 Survivor Leadership Initiative Pilot Budget (Annual)

Total: \$155,000

1. **Personnel** (\$100,000)
 - Program Manager: \$70,000
 - Survivor Leadership Coordinator: \$30,000
2. **Training and Leadership Development** (\$13,000)
 - Curriculum development and materials: \$8,000
 - Certifications (peer support, advocacy): \$5,000
3. **Program Operations** (\$20,000)
 - Space rental/utilities: \$8,000
 - Technology (laptops, Zoom, software): \$7,000
 - Supplies and printing: \$5,000
4. **Support Services** (\$3,000)
 - Crisis/emergency support: \$3,000
5. **Community Engagement and Advocacy** (\$10,000)
 - Community events and awareness efforts: \$4,000
 - Local travel for advocacy: \$4,000
 - Outreach materials: \$2,000
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation** (\$3,000)
 - Basic data tracking tools: \$3,000
7. **Participant Support Services** (\$4,000)

- Meals during sessions: \$2,000
 - Additional transportation assistance: \$2,000
8. **Indirect Costs** (\$2,000)

Works Cited

Alabama. National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2026).

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USA Human Trafficking: ZIPDO Education Reports 2026. ZipDo. (2026, February 12).

<https://zipdo.co/usa-human-trafficking-statistics/>

Worthy2. (2024). *Fight Sex Trafficking | Worthy2*. Worthy2. <https://www.worthy2.org/>