

Organization Name: [Project Be Free](#)

Date of Interview: April 19, 2024

Organization Interviewees: Manuela Noske, Hadyra Stinebuck

Impact 100 GRT Interviewers: Katya Wojcik, Bella Lomax, Alice Butler

Application Link: [Click here](#)

Organization Mission: The mission of Project Be Free is to provide crisis response to individuals and families affected by domestic violence.

What are the compelling reasons for Impact 100 to partner with this organization?

Project Be Free (PBF) provides an innovative approach to dealing with domestic violence that centers on the whole family unit (survivors, abusers, **and** dependents) as the recipients of mental health services and support. Their model is based on the realization that families who are experiencing DV are often in a cycle of intergenerational violence and trauma - people who have been abused by their relatives or witnessed domestic violence in their household are more likely to continue the abuse they have suffered and observed. This includes youth who may have witnessed an abusive marital relationship and are prone to perpetrate violence against their own parents. PBF hence wraps whole families with support services to help build healthier family foundations. By disrupting the cycle of intergenerational violence, the work PBF does is transformational for families and the communities in which they are embedded.

The PBF model has had measurable success in Renton, Newcastle, Kent where it has been implemented. To fund their work, they rely on the standard business model in which DV service providers are paid by cities through reimbursement grants. This model is similar to the billing process that occurs between a health service provider and a medical insurance. PBF can only bill for specific procedures that relate to work with survivors of Intimate Partner Violence; mental health services and support for family members, however, are not covered procedures and hence not billable. The innovative, family-focused part of their work is hence not getting funded even though it is the key to preventing future violence and making sure families can stay together.

A grant from Impact 100 Seattle would help the organization move out of the current “proof-of-concept” phase into greater operational stability and help them bring their family service model to additional communities in the Puget Sound region. But most importantly, it would help them mainstream their DV family intervention model and thereby enable them to begin the slow process of systemic change.

Do you have any reservations about this organization as a potential grantee partner for Impact 100? None.

What does the organization do?

PBF provides mental health and support services to families that are affected by domestic violence. These services are grouped under the following core programs:

- 1. Crisis Response** – provision of on-scene resources and connections to:
 - Shelter and short hotel stays
 - Basics such as hygiene and food
 - DV intervention treatment
 - Translation services
 - Mental health and substance counseling and intervention services

- 2. DV Advocacy** – provisions of
 - Safety plans

- Filing for protection orders
- Free short-term DV-specific therapy services

3. Youth Mentorship – provision of services for youth who have witnessed DV or are exhibiting signs of violence among their peers and/or families

- In-school healthy relationship education groups for youth
- In-school coaching sessions

Who does the organization serve?

Most PBF clients are BIPOC. In January of 2024 PBF supported 101 households of which 75.2% identified as BIPOC. Over 60% of clients are immigrants or undocumented individuals who face many barriers to receiving assistance including lack of transportation, difficulty navigating legal system, lack of housing funding, lack of legal representation, low English proficiency, isolation, lack of community, and difficulty accessing and/or fear of seeking mental health support. And while most families who receive support through PBF are BIPOC, it is important to remember that DV occurs in cars as well as mansions. Through their Crisis Response Program, PBF responds to all families and individuals in crisis regardless of their cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds.

How does the organization reflect, maintain proximity to and stay accountable to the community it serves?

PBF intentionally hires individuals who reflect the backgrounds of the clients they predominantly serve. 100% of PBF staff and board members identify as people of color and many have experienced DV themselves at some point in their lives. This gives PBF staff first-hand understanding of the impact of DV, but also the systemic barriers BIPOC communities face when in need of services and support. PBF places great emphasis on having bicultural/bilingual staff to provide services as it establishes trust with survivors. This ensures that survivors are met with effective, compassionate, and culturally competent support.

What inequity is the organization addressing and what is the root cause of that inequity? How is the organization addressing this?

While DV can occur in families that are economically stable, low-income families, including those of immigrant/refugee background are particularly prone to experience DV because of social and economic deprivation which are more present and evident within these groups. PBF stresses the importance of working within existing communities, realizing that change can only happen within the family systems if the cycles of intergenerational cycles are broken. This can only happen if all family members are allowed safe space where they can receive resources and therapeutic tools.

How is the organization collaborating with other community-based organizations?

PBF works with all existing DV service providers in the Puget Sound region as referrals partners to provide their clients with shelter/housing, basic needs, youth mentorship and other critical needs. They also partner creatively with all other community-based organizations in the region to find assistance for their clients' needs.

What is the vision for the organization in 5 years?

PBF is planning to establish themselves in most, if not all, of the South End and venture into new territories such as the East Side, including Bellevue. These areas have begun to show interest in their work, and they are keen to meet that interest head-on. In this five-year vision, they see themselves equipped with the resources necessary to deploy the team effectively, focusing on the areas where their impact is most needed and valuable. Moreover, they are committed to nurturing and strengthening their partnership such as they have

with the City of Renton in which they can reach out to the mayor and receive a prompt response, or request data outputs at the county level and receive them promptly. This level of collaboration is key to their continued success.

What is the organization's area of greatest need?

PBF has started rolling out its Co-Responder Program in Auburn where three additional Crisis Responders are needed to keep their services timely, attentive, and intentional. Auburn has the 2nd largest DV call rate and the highest rate of Spanish speakers in King County, surpassing the number of native English speakers within that city. The number of DV calls in Auburn have averaged 1,800 yearly.

Highlight a story of impact.

About 3 months ago, PBF responded alongside law enforcement to a 911 DV call in Kent. Upon arrival, they learned that the victim had left her home at the age of 13 and that she had come under the control of a man who was not only physically abusive, but also trafficked her. PBF was unable to file a protection order on her behalf, because the young woman was still under age and the law requires the parents of the youth to file the request which was not an option in her case. Creatively the PBF team was able to cultivate a relationship with this youth and her grandmother who took her in; meanwhile, the victim has been working with PBF's youth outreach specialist weekly, making plans for getting her GED. She turned 18 recently and was able to submit her protection order which was granted this week. PBF was able to secure permanent housing through collaboration with REST, an organization in Seattle that assists victims of trafficking. She found a job 4 weeks ago and is now well on her way to controlling her own life. The young woman also knows others in the same situation and with the trust that PBF has built, she wants to help others. The youth shared "I never knew there was an organization that did DV advocacy for the youth."