



BCSTH Bursary Fund Program Evaluation Report

BC Society of Transition Houses | January 2024



BC Society of
Transition Houses

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Executive Summary

Financial independence is the largest barrier for women and their children leaving violent and abusive relationships (Circle of Prevention, 2002). Economic and financial abuse is an almost universal experience for women who experience domestic violence (CCfWE, 2023) and it can take many years to rebuild their economic security (WomenACT, 2020). The worsening housing crisis in BC, coupled with the severe lack of second and third stage and long-term housing, means that for many women and their children fleeing violence there is nowhere for them to go on leaving a Transition House; they are forced to choose between homelessness, returning to their violent partners or leaving their communities and support networks to find affordable housing elsewhere.

Flexible financial assistance is a powerful tool for economic empowerment among gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and is becoming an increasingly common strategy to enhance safety and economic and housing stability. Program evaluations to date have evidenced potentially significant cost-savings as a result of being able to stabilize housing and prevent homelessness, with even small amounts of money reported to make a big difference. The current report evaluated the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) Bursary Fund (BBF), a flexible financial assistance program that provides survivors who have accessed BCSTH member programs with bursaries of up to \$3,000 for education and employment opportunities to support themselves to become financially independent. The report is also focused on whether BBF recipients joined the community and social service sector after receiving the support, to evaluate the impact of flexible financial assistance as a recruitment support for the sector. Because the evaluation included the BBF support workers, the evaluation also considered whether the BBF enhanced job satisfaction and retention for anti-violence workers.

Online surveys, focus groups and interviews were conducted Between June – November, 2023 with women who have received a bursary and the anti-violence workers who have supported them, to understand more about the impacts this program has had since it was launched five years ago. The findings align with those reported in existing research looking at the impacts of flexible financial assistance, and include improved mental health and well-being due to reduced stress and enhanced confidence and self-worth; improved relationships with children; enhanced safety; and the ability to keep going and focus on the future. Lived experience is invaluable within the community and social services sector, and almost one third of bursary recipients to date have applied for a bursary to pursue education and employment opportunities within this field. Several women who participated in this evaluation talked about wanting to give back through volunteering or employment opportunities as a result of their own experiences. Benefits for anti-violence workers included enhanced job satisfaction, a boost in morale and a sense of hope.

Despite the fact that the need for flexible financial assistance for GBV survivors in Canada has been identified by multiple sources, existing initiatives are piecemeal and support is often small. Increased investment in this approach has the potential to provide effective, dignified and empowering support to survivors and their children to help them to move forwards and recover after violence, whilst also strengthening the sector more broadly. Recommendations provided for improving the BBF Program support this notion, as workers and women alike shared that there is a need for more funding to allow the program to be promoted more widely to reach more women and their children fleeing violence and at risk of violence in BC.

“The women I helped were really happy and relieved to receive [the bursary]. Finances are a huge reason why a lot of women stay with their abusers because they can’t afford to live on their own, but funds like this really help empower them and allow them to live away from their abusers.”

- Anti-violence Worker

“It’s very much appreciated to help women like me who want to study, when they are in that phase of life where they think life is ended, but I got a new life and hope to fulfill my dreams. Thank you”

- Bursary Recipient

Introduction & Literature Review

Financial independence is the largest barrier for women and their children leaving violent and abusive relationships (Circle of Prevention, 2002). This can be as a direct result of financial abuse, for example abusers may control and steal the woman's money, deliberately ruin her credit rating, or prevent her from working or studying; or it can be an indirect result of the impacts of experiencing violence, such as costs associated with relocation or physical injuries or mental health affecting her ability to work (Sullivan, Bomsta & Hacksaylo, 2016). The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCfWE) report that 95% of women who experience domestic violence also experience economic and financial abuse, as well as a 52% rise in economic abuse since COVID-19. Furthermore, this type of abuse can continue to impact survivors for several years after separating from their abuser as a result of issues relating to employment, credit and debt, mental and physical health challenges, and continued attempts from the abuser to exercise control over the woman long after separation (CCfWE, 2023). Financial hardship is a near universal experience for women who have left an abusive relationship and it can take many years for them to rebuild economic security (WomenACT, 2020).

The gender pay gap is one of the most significant hurdles for women to financial independence (UN Women, n.d.) and single mothers are the most affected (Zhang, 2009). In BC in 2021, 58% of minimum wage earners were female (BC Gov News, 2022) and almost 40% of children living in poverty are in lone-parent families (First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, 2022). Rent in B.C. is the highest in all of Canada; in Vancouver and Victoria less than one per cent of housing units are affordable to those earning the lowest 20 per cent of incomes (CMHC, 2023 as cited in Fagan, 2023). A low paying job without benefits is not enough to ensure women and their children can transition to a new home and live free from poverty. The worsening housing crisis in BC, coupled with the severe lack of second and third stage and long-term housing, means that for many women and their children fleeing violence there is nowhere

for them to go on leaving a Transition House; they are forced to choose between homelessness, returning to their violent partners or leaving their communities and support networks to find affordable housing elsewhere. This results in longer stays in Transition Houses and in turn creates a bottleneck for other women and their children fleeing violence who are looking for shelter. In BC, it is estimated that only 25% of women departing Transition Houses move to precarious housing, and only 4% of those women leave for safe, affordable permanent housing (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2020). Between April 2022 and March 2023, 89 survivors in BC became homeless upon leaving transition housing programs, and a further 293 returned to living with their abuser (BC Housing data as reported by Fagan, 2023). It is thus not surprising that it takes an average of seven attempts before a woman successfully leaves a violent relationship for good (Domesticshelters.org, n.d.).

For a long time, flexible financial assistance has been used by culturally-specific organizations in the United States (U.S.) to support survivors from marginalized communities, who face higher barriers to accessing transition houses and emergency shelters (National Alliance for Safe Housing and Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.; Marcus, 2022). As a result of this innovative practice, flexible financial assistance is emerging as a powerful tool for economic empowerment among gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and is becoming increasingly common within mainstream services as a strategy to increase safety and economic and housing stability (NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence, 2021; Ayeni & Hampton, 2023; Sullivan, Bomsta & Hacksaylo, 2016).

Flexible financial assistance is a financial support provided to survivors to help them achieve independence after violence. There is some variation in existing flexible financial assistance models with regards to e.g., the amounts,

frequency and number of disbursements per survivor; whether or not funds are accompanied by advocacy, oftentimes specifically housing advocacy; time taken to disburse funds; and the requirement of applications and/or supporting documents. However, the general principles remain the same; flexible financial assistance can be used in a variety of ways to meet the unique needs of survivors, should be quick and easy to access, does not require survivors to provide evidence of abuse or their financial situation, and does not need to be repaid. While the use of flexible financial assistance is becoming more common, the existing evidence base evaluating this approach is relatively small and almost entirely based in the United States. The findings, however, are encouraging. A 2021 systematic review of the evidence base for housing interventions for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) survivors called for further evaluation of flexible funding intervention strategies (Klein, Chesworth, Howland-Myers, Rizo, & Macy, 2021) and a recent qualitative study highlighted the need for more research and advocacy for flexible funding as well as survivors' recommendations that communities should offer a variety of housing options ranging from domestic violence shelters to financial assistance (Rizo, Klein, Chesworth, Macy & Dooley, 2020).

Domestic Violence Housing First: Impacts on Housing Stability

Domestic Violence (DV) agencies in some states in the U.S. have implemented and evaluated the Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) model, which aims to reduce the risk of homelessness for DV survivors and their children by enabling them to maintain their housing, or obtain new safe and stable housing (Sullivan, Guerrero, Simmons, López-Zerón, Ayeni et al., 2023). Flexible financial assistance to support with direct and indirect housing related costs is a key component of this model, in combination with mobile advocacy (taking place at a convenient, safe location for survivors for as long as it is needed)

and community engagement (partnerships and education about DV for landlords, housing providers, law enforcement and city governments to improve the community response to DV) (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013; Mbilinyi, 2015). The model has been evaluated in Washington State and California, with promising results.

A pilot of the DVHF model was conducted by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) between 2010-2015. In the first cohort, out of a sample of 125 survivors, 89% were in permanent housing 15 months after program intake, and had been for an average of 11 months, despite facing multiple barriers to housing. Of this group, 95% reported no housing interruptions during this time (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013). In a second cohort of survivors with higher barriers to permanent housing in underserved communities (i.e., racialized, rural, Native, immigrant and culturally specific communities), 88% were in permanent housing at final check-in, and had been for an average of 17 months (sample = 438 survivors). The program eliminated housing as a reason to stay in abusive relationships and mobile advocacy and flexible financial assistance were determined essential to housing retention by enabling advocates to meet the unique and varied needs of survivors (Mbilinyi, 2015; Strategic Prevention Solutions, 2011).

Following the success of this pilot, a longitudinal demonstration evaluation (2016-2021) compared the impacts of DVHF on survivor's lives with services as usual (SAU) (Sullivan, López-Zerón, Farero, Ayeni, Simmons et al., 2022). At 6-month follow up, survivors who received at least one aspect of DVHF (flexible financial assistance, housing advocacy, or both) reported significant improvements in their housing stability compared with those who received SAU (sample=345). They also reported significantly less economic abuse, possibly suggesting that flexible financial assistance reduced vulnerability to financial harm from the abuser (Sullivan, López-Zerón, Farero, Ayeni, Simmons et al., 2022). These findings remained

evident at 12-months (Sullivan, Guerrero, Simmons, López-Zerón, Ayeni et al., 2023) and survivors receiving DVHF now also reported decreased physical and psychological abuse and decreased abuse in the form of their children being used against them, compared to those receiving SAU. At 24-months, survivors who received DVHF continued to report stabilized housing and lower abuse at a rate significantly higher than those receiving SAU, as well as decreased rates of depression, anxiety and PTSD (Chen & Sullivan, 2022). The authors call for stronger investment in DV agencies to support the use of flexible financial assistance so they can provide survivor-driven services that meet each individual's unique circumstances and needs.

In California, a statewide evaluation of the DVHF model highlighted flexible financial assistance as critical to the model's implementation (López-Zerón, Clements & Sullivan, 2019). Just over \$3M USD was allocated to 925 survivors over a 21-month period, for a total of 4,010 disbursements, resulting in 425 families staying in their homes and 367 survivors obtaining new safe, stable housing. Just over half of survivors (58%) used the flexible funds to prevent homelessness.

Cost-Savings Analyses of Flexible Financial Assistance Models

Dwyer et al (2023) report the impacts of the world's first direct cash transfer program to empower people to move beyond homelessness in Canada, the New Leaf Project. This randomized-controlled-trial provided a one-time unconditional cash transfer of \$7,500 CAD to 50 people experiencing recent homelessness in Vancouver, BC. Participants who received the cash transfer were reported to reduce societal costs by as much as \$777 per person per year after the cost of the cash transfer, as a result of reduced time staying in shelters, while also freeing up shelter beds to help more people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, Rivera (2019) reports possible cost-savings of as much as \$1,960,050 USD in emergency housing and assistance costs as a result of an initiative by Violence Free Colorado that used financial

assistance and housing assistance to help victims of crime¹. In this evaluation, 90% of survivors had either maintained or obtained housing at immediate follow-up, of whom 51% had remained in their own homes. Six-months later, 59% of survivors contacted for follow up reported no change in their housing, and 32% were living in a new home (Rivera, 2019).

Rivera (2019) highlights that most survivors accessing Violence Free Colorado's initiative received a relatively small amount of assistance over only a few disbursements (range = 1-23, median = 2) and this is a common theme across many of the above studies. Across all phases of the DVHF research conducted by the WSCADV, small amounts of funding (often less than \$1,000 USD) were reported to make the biggest differences, e.g., drivers licence renewal fees, car repairs, utility/loan/credit card payments, children's school supplies, baby clothes/diapers, work uniforms and professional license fees etc. (Bluemoon, 2020). Survivors no longer had to choose between paying for critical items or paying their rent, and frontline workers reported that survivors' ability to find work or return to school was a key factor that enabled them to retain their housing (Mbilinyi, 2015). Table 1 compares flexible financial assistance distributed across different studies.

Furthermore, programs providing just one-time flexible financial assistance have also proven to be effective. A longitudinal evaluation of a flexible funding program operated by the District Alliance for Safe Housing (D.A.S.H.) in Washington DC, which offers one-time flexible financial assistance and, if necessary, brief housing advocacy to prevent homelessness for intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors examined the impacts of flexible financial assistance on housing stability as well as other impacts on survivors' lives (Sullivan, Bomsta & HacsKaylo, 2016). At the time of receiving the funds, all survivors (n=55) were either at risk of losing their housing (65%) or were already homeless (35%). At the 6-month follow up, 94% of survivors interviewed (n=50) were housed, the majority of whom had either retained their original housing (40%) or moved to new housing (44%). Most survivors in this study used the funds

¹ Predominantly DV and Family Violence survivors (83%)

for direct housing costs such as rental assistance and paying back utility bills, however others used them for indirectly related costs such as paying car loans/insurance or securing childcare to maintain employment. Again, the varied use of the funds highlights the importance of flexibility in such programs. Beyond housing stability, survivors in this study explained that the funds also provided stress relief, enabled them to better parent their children, and allowed them to 'get back on track' by keeping up with their jobs, bills, families and making future plans.

the pandemic (Wood, Baumler, Guillot-Wright, Torres, Hairston; et al., 2021; Durrence, Doyle, & Passi, 2021). In this evaluation, flexible financial assistance was reported to remove the need for many survivors to access shelters, thus broadening the group of survivors who could access shelter support. This finding aligns with observations from the WSCADV who noted that providers were able to use flexible funds to support survivors who may have struggled to access emergency shelters, for example due to significant mental illness (Mbilinyi, 2015).

Impacts of Covid-19 Relief Funds for Domestic Violence Survivors

Since most flexible financial assistance models include housing advocacy, it can be difficult to analyse the impacts of these two components separately (Sullivan et al., 2023). In the U.S., COVID-19 relief funds proved an effective strategy for addressing COVID-19 related impacts on survivors during a time when rates of domestic violence spiked and the capacity of transition houses and communal shelters was significantly reduced because of social distancing (Marcus, 2022). Evaluation of these funds sheds some light on the efficacy of flexible financial assistance specifically. For example, The NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) evaluated an emergency financial relief program that provided microgrants to survivors from communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and found that these small grants helped improve recipients housing and financial stability, helped survivors and their children to feel safer and helped improve survivors' mental health. The Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (HCDVCC) in Texas used COVID-19 relief funds to provide more than \$3 million USD in flexible financial assistance grants to survivors during the pandemic, the majority of which were allocated to culturally-specific organizations, centring the needs of black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) survivors who are less likely to access mainstream services, and who were experiencing higher rates of DV during

Table 1. Comparison of Flexible Financial Assistance Awarded (All currency = USD)

Study	Time Period	Total Assistance Provided	# of Survivors	Total # of Disbursements	# of Disbursements per Survivor	Assistance per survivor	Disbursement amount
<i>Mbilinyi & Kreiter (2013) The Washington State DVHF Program: Evaluation Summary. Cohort 1 Agencies. July 2011 – December 2012</i>	Average length of advocacy = 14 months		151*			Average = \$1,500 Range: \$20 - \$10,000	
<i>Mbilinyi, L. (2015) The Washington State DHF Program: Cohort 2 Agencies Final Evaluation Report. September 2011 – September 2014</i>	Average length of advocacy = 15 months		438			Average = \$1,250 Range: \$40- \$10,000	
<i>Sullivan, Bomsta & Hacksaylo (2016) Flexible funding as a promising strategy to prevent homelessness for Survivors of IPV</i>	18 months		55	55	1 (one-time financial assistance)	Average = \$2,079 Range: < \$300 – >\$8,000	N/A
<i>Lopez-Zeron et al. (2019) DVHF: A Statewide Evaluation in California</i>	21 months	\$3,002,355	925	4,010	Average = 4 (Range: 2-36)	Average = \$3,000 Range: \$0.50 - \$6,385	
<i>Rivera, E. (2019) An Evaluation of the Colorado Housing for Crime Victims Special Project</i>	20 months	\$957,494	438	1,444	Median = 2 (Range: 1-23)	Median = \$1,397 Range: \$14 - \$20,815	
<i>Bluemoon, D. (2020) What We've Learned: DVHF Extended Report. WSCADV</i>	46 months	\$873,728	1,452	2,566	57% required one-time financial assistance	Average = \$602 Range: \$0.56 - \$5,450 (93% of disbursements were <\$1,000; And 78% were <\$500)	Average = \$340.00
<i>NYC Mayor's Office to ENDVGBV (2021) Evaluation Summary Report: Emergency Financial Relief Microgrants Program for Survivors of DV & GBV</i>		\$468,750	377			Average = \$1,243 (Grants capped at \$1,500)	
<i>Chen & Sullivan, (2022) DVHF Demonstration Evaluation Project: Final Report of Findings through 24 Months. WSCADV</i>	6 months	\$217,500	169	811		Average = \$1,949 Median = \$100 Range: \$11- \$9,552	
<i>Oyesola Oluwafunmilayo & Hampton, (2023) Evaluation of a Flexible Funding Pilot Program to Prevent Homelessness among BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Survivors</i>	5 months	\$36,264	30	127	Range: 1-15 (65% received more than one disbursement)	Range: \$50- \$4,984 (37% received <\$500)	Range: \$8- \$2,500

* Figures reported reflect all survivors served (not sample participating in evaluation)

Impacts of Flexible Financial Assistance on Survivor's Well-being

More recently, the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania piloted a flexible financial assistance model for BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ survivors of DV and sexual assault (SA) with the aim of supporting survivors to retain their current housing or find new long-term housing (Aveni & Hampton, 2023). The principles of this model included survivor driven advocacy dependent on needs (not necessarily housing specific) and in this mixed-gender sample (54% male) of 30 survivors, one third were able to retain their homes, 26% moved out of homelessness and 13% were able to move from one home to another. Again, a key outcome reported in this pilot was the impact of flexible financial assistance on survivors' well-being; 67% reported improved well-being as evidenced by reduced stress, increased self-esteem, increased access to opportunities, more sense of agency and more capacity to work towards their goals. The flexible funds were also reported to enhance the agency's capacity to meet the needs of their community again by reaching survivors they otherwise may not have been able to (e.g., undocumented survivors).

The WSCADV highlight similar impacts specifically associated with flexible financial assistance as reported by survivors and agency staff in their DVHF evaluation project. In their pilot project, flexible funds were reported to be directly responsible for providers' ability to help survivors improve their psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-worth and dignity (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013). One participating program in this pilot project described flexible financial assistance as "**the missing piece**" in their ability to provide comprehensive services to survivors (Strategic Prevention Solutions Ltd, 2011) and in the next phase of this research, the demonstration project, the total flexibility of funds was reported to be key to the DVHF model's success (Blumoon, 2020).

Impacts for Anti-violence Workers

Staff participating in cohort 2 of the pilot project also reported that flexible financial assistance had a positive impact on their own morale due to a) feeling validated that the funders trusted that staff knew best how to support survivors, and b) being able to "**truly help survivors, meet them where they were at, and say "yes" to simple requests that could make a big difference in their lives**" (Mbilinyi, 2015 page 55). Agency Directors reported that the DVHF model improved confidence of leadership and the agency as a whole, due to the capacity to impact hundreds of families, with one director describing the flexible financial assistance as "**the happiest money [advocates have] ever had.**" (Mbilinyi, 2015 page 55). The flexible funds reportedly challenged agencies to "**think outside the box**", become more innovative and dream bigger, while services became more focussed, efficient, cost effective and collaborative as advocates drew on existing community resources before utilizing the flexible funds to meet needs not covered elsewhere. A key success identified by Cohort 1 of the DVHF model was that seeing survivors succeed prevented staff burnout (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013).

"One agency director described flexible financial assistance as the happiest money advocates have ever had, and seeing survivors succeed was reported to prevent staff burnout."

- Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Project

Impacts on Children & Youth

The WSCADV research also discusses the impacts of flexible financial assistance on survivors' children. Survivors in cohort 1 of the pilot project reported that funds for children's activities helped to stabilize their children, which in turn helped to restore their dignity as mothers and enabled them to focus better at work (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013). In cohort 2, several resources provided by agencies were reported to be invaluable for survivors and their children, including school clothes and supplies, gifts around holidays, and registration at sports camps (Mbilinyi, 2015). In the Cohort 2 evaluation, the positive impacts of permanent housing on children's safety, well-being, and happiness were reported to be among the most important outcomes for survivors who were parenting and improved quality of life, improved relationships with their children, and children sleeping better at night were all reported outcomes. In some instances, permanent housing even led to survivors eventually regaining custody of their children (Mbilinyi, 2015).

Similar findings are reported by Bomsta and Sullivan (2018) who assessed survivor's perceptions of how flexible funding and brief advocacy provided by D.A.S.H. impacted their children. At six-month follow up, 95% of mothers and their children were housed and in some cases the funds were again reported to have allowed families who had previously experienced separations to resume living together. Mothers in this study observed that a stable living environment made their children happier, less stressed, and more comfortable. It allowed children to stay in familiar schools, day cares, and neighbourhoods, maintain their friendships and routines, and enabled them to focus on school and avoid the many negative outcomes associated with housing instability and homelessness. Mothers also reported positive behaviour changes including improved mood, attention at school and better grades. Children were reported to be safer, both in terms of safety from the abuser and from the dangers of homelessness. Finally, housing stability and decreased abuse meant that mothers were happier and less stressed, which positively impacted their

children's stress levels. The authors state that **"flexible funding appears to be another way to support children in recovery from exposure to IPV {sic Intimate Partner Violence} by supporting their caregiver"** (Bomsta & Sullivan, 2018 page 377).

These projects demonstrate that there are many positive outcomes associated with flexible financial assistance models for DV survivors, including:

- high numbers of survivors achieving safe and stable housing;
- reaching a wider group of survivors, namely the most vulnerable of survivors, than is typically achieved by mainstream services;
- reducing the burden on mainstream services and enhancing the capacity of the sector by removing the number of survivors requiring access to or returning to shelters;
- potentially significant cost-savings;
- improving well-being, increasing safety and restoring dignity for survivors and in turn improving stability, safety and well-being for their children; and
- boosting staff morale and reducing burnout.

"Flexible funding appears to be another way to support children in recovery from exposure to intimate partner violence by supporting their caregiver."

- Bomsta & Sullivan, 2018

Flexible Financial Assistance Programs for Domestic Violence Survivors in Canada

While the literature reviewed above is compelling, it is almost entirely based in the U.S. and typically combines flexible financial assistance with housing advocacy. While it was not possible to find any studies evaluating flexible financial assistance initiatives for DV survivors in Canada, it was possible to find information regarding a few existing flexible financial assistance programs for DV survivors, as outlined below. Importantly, with regards to provincial government programs, this support is often small and only Alberta and Quebec offer such support without tying it to social assistance eligibility (Cameron, Tedds & Yu, 2023). Non-profit organizations (e.g., the YWCA) and trades unions in some places are also helping to meet this service gap.

Non-Profit Organizations

YWCA – National Emergencies Survivor Supports Fund

Canada's first National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (the NESS Fund) hosted by the YWCA and funded by The Slight Family Foundation, is available in 12 regions across Canada². The NESS Fund provides one-time financial support of up to \$2,000 CDN to women and gender-diverse survivors of GBV to help them leave unsafe homes or emergency shelters/precarious housing situations and establish safe, stable housing.

Funds can be used for:

- First and last month's rent;
- Rental arrears that prevent survivors from signing a new lease;
- Set up expenses for utilities;
- Utilities (hydro, internet, phone) arrears that prevent survivors from setting up new utilities' contracts;
- Moving expenses;

- Storage expense;
- Essential furniture for a new home;
- Travel expenses;
- Gender-affirming care and services as needed by trans, Two-Spirit or gender-diverse people;
- Expenses related to attaining permanent resident status or Canadian citizenship; and/or;
- Other essential expenses related to leaving violence and establishing safe, stable housing.

At the time of writing, the fund is reported to be able to provide 1,500 grants over the next four years in the 12 regions it is available across Canada, with much more needed to be able to meet the needs of survivors nationwide.

YWCA, Metro Vancouver

The YWCA in Metro Vancouver offers several [programs and services for job seekers and employers](#), two of which are specifically for survivors of violence and abuse:

- [Survive to Thrive](#) is a free 12-week program that offers specialized employment and skills training services for survivors of violence and/or abuse with support from trained trauma and violence-informed career advisors and facilitators.
- [Axis](#) is a twelve-week, trauma-informed one-to-one employment program for self-identified immigrant women who have experienced violence and are residents of BC. Survivors are supported by a careers advisor to develop an employment or training plan to achieve sustainable employment or further education. Services are provided in-person in Metro Vancouver as well as virtually throughout BC and are available in English, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, Dari, Mandarin, Cantonese, Filipino, and Ukrainian. Participants may have access to financial assistance for food, work clothing, transit and childcare.

² YWCA Halifax, NS; YWCA St. John's, NL; YWCA Brandon, MB; YWCA Metro Vancouver, BC; YWCA Sudbury, ON; YWCA Toronto, ON; YWCA Hamilton, ON; YWCA St. Thomas Elgin, ON; YWCA Muskoka, ON; YWCA Québec, QC; YWCA Regina, SK; YWCA Saskatoon, SK.

Provincial Governments

Escaping Abuse Benefit (Alberta)

The Alberta Government provides emergency funding to Canadian citizens, permanent residents, refugees and refugee claimants living in Alberta who are escaping family violence or domestic violence via the Escaping Abuse Benefit. The fund can help with expenses and other supports to get survivors to safety and/or start a new life.

Eligible expenses include:

- emergency transportation to a safe place (for example, women’s shelter);
- costs to stay in a hotel or motel for a short time if shelters are full or not available;
- an allowance to buy personal items not provided by the shelter;
- emergency items not available through shelters such as prescription drugs, child care, dental and eye care services;
- one-time costs to move within Alberta or Canada for survivors who must leave their community to escape a threat of family violence or domestic violence;
- a one-time allowance to help set up a new home;
- the damage deposit for a new home;
- costs for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter;
- costs for telephone calls and transportation to access counselling or legal advice;
- extended health coverage for adults and children from families with limited incomes.

Victims of Violence Special Needs Benefit (Newfoundland)

Under this Newfoundland government benefit, victims of violence can receive emergency transportation to a safe place, regardless of distance. Those not in receipt of income support may be eligible for a personal allowance during part or all of the duration of their stay in a transition house or shelter and assistance with rent or other expenses such as increased costs

of getting to work may also be provided. For recipients moving into new accommodation, a “Start-Up Allowance” to purchase necessary items for setting up a new home (e.g., beds, dishes, linens, clothing, etc.) is provided. Allowances range from \$500 to \$1,500 for recipients on the island (depending on the number of dependents they have) and from \$600 to \$1,950 for those on the coast of Labrador.

Emergency Financial Assistance (Quebec)

This financial assistance from the Government of Quebec helps victims of sexual or domestic violence quickly leave a dangerous environment when their safety, or that of their dependents, is compromised. It is intended to cover short-term transportation, housing and living costs of eligible victims who must meet the following criteria:

- They are a victim of domestic or sexual violence, including sexual assault or exploitation;
- They are in a situation where there is a sense of urgency requiring the person to quickly:
 - leave a dangerous place;
 - go to a safe place;
 - receive emergency medical services related to the violence suffered;
- They do not have the means to do so.

Assistance is requested through the Emergency Financial Assistance Helpline for organizations in direct contact with victims of violence. The request is made by workers and access to the funds is initiated as soon as the victim’s eligibility is confirmed. No forms need to be completed and no money is given directly to victims.

Union

[CUPE 3902 Sexual and Domestic Violence Survivors Fund](#) (Toronto)

This is a member-driven fund that responds to union members' needs and is intended to serve as an immediate and individualized form of support for members who are survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence. Due to the unique and varied needs of survivors, the fund deliberately does not define all eligible expenses - members are invited to submit claims for any expenses they consider eligible. The fund is allocated \$25,000 per year, has a \$5,000 cap per person per fund year, and a \$15,000 total cap per person.

In Canada, there are other financial support and economic empowerment initiatives, though not necessarily flexible funding models. For example, the [YWCA December 6 Fund](#) is available in certain cities and provides interest-free loans to women and gender diverse individuals who are fleeing abuse to help them establish themselves in safety. There are also a variety of educational, training and employment funds and initiatives for women and single parents supported by non-profits and provincial governments. A table sharing more information about some of these initiatives is available in [Appendix A](#).

Flexible financial assistance for DV survivors in Canada is limited and piecemeal, despite the fact that the need for such support has been identified by multiple sources. Canada's National Action Plan (NAP) to end Gender Based Violence was published by the federal government in 2022 and emphasises the need for economic security policies both as preventative measures and as exit supports for survivors of GBV (Cameron, Tedds and Yu, 2023). The NAP comprises of five pillars and Cameron, Tedds and Yu (2023) report that **"Pillar 1 - Support for Victims, Survivors and Their Families - involves a commitment to investing in and extending access to effective supports and services, including emergency financial assistance, to ensure people impacted by violence can make a safe exit and recovery"** (page 5). Pillar 5, 'Social Infrastructure

and Enabling Environment' also highlights a need to improve socioeconomic benefits to reduce the inequalities that increase the risk and likelihood of experiencing GBV (Cameron, Tedds & Yu, 2023).

Cameron, Tedd & Yu, (2023) also highlight that gender-based violence experts are calling for improved cash transfer programs in order to prevent and respond to GBV. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan advocates for a guaranteed annual livable income as a short-term priority to help address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (Cameron, Tedds & Yu, 2023); and Women's Shelters Canada's Roadmap on the NAP to end Violence Against Women (VAW) and GBV shares 100 recommendations to support effective implementation of the federal government's NAP. Among these is the establishment of a lump-sum payment equal to 3-4 months of social assistance benefits for people fleeing violence (Dale, Maki & Nitia, 2021 as cited in Cameron, Tedds & Yu, 2023).

These recommendations align with the 2020 Final Report of the British Columbia Expert Panel on Basic Income 'Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society' (Green, Kesselman & Tedds, 2020) of the implementation of a 3-tiered support program for people fleeing violence, as follows:

1. Provide a substantial lump-sum payment equivalent to three or four months of Income Assistance benefits, accessible without proof of violence.
2. Enhance hardship assistance for people with transitional high needs that integrates cash benefits with access to wraparound supports to address, for example, traumatic brain injury and other medical conditions, permanent housing, and transportation needs.
3. Transition people into the 'Expected to Work' category of Income Assistance after securing permanent, stable housing with continued wraparound supports.

The Women Abuse Council of Toronto (WomenACT) also advise that the relationship between women's

economic security and VAW needs to be considered in order to develop policies, programs and practices that mitigate the economic consequences of abuse, promote women's safety and advance their economic security and financial independence (WomenACT, 2020). Specifically, they suggest increasing access to financial literacy education for survivors; providing accessible and free credit repair and debt remediation services for survivors; and increasing emergency funds available to help women flee violence, obtain housing and rebuild their economic security. The CCfWE emphasise the importance of responding quickly to economic abuse in order to reduce the negative impacts on a survivors' financial situation, as well as on their employment, education, earning potential and long-term stability, and give them the best chance of regaining control of their life (CCfWE, 2023).

Finally, the need for flexible financial support has been identified by survivors themselves. A 2022 article published by the Globe and Mail reports that financial aid for survivors during transition was deemed essential to support women to successfully leave, with both cash assistance and leniency on bills and credit card payments proposed by women with lived experience. One survivor stated that a financial cushion that could enable survivors to access supports such as trauma-informed counselling and small business loans to allow them to start to rebuild their lives could have the potential to **"save some women's lives"** (Grant, Renzetti & Hayes, 2022).

The current report provides an evaluation of a flexible financial assistance model in British Columbia, Canada for survivors of GBV, the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) Bursary Fund (BBF). To our knowledge, this is the first evaluation of a flexible funding model for GBV survivors in Canada. Specifically, this evaluation assesses the impacts of the BBF to successfully support survivors to achieve independence by providing small bursaries to support employment and education goals, as well as exploring some potential outcomes for the community and social services sector more broadly. These include impacts on staff morale, and the likelihood of women with lived experience pursuing education and employment opportunities within the community and social services sector.

The BCSTH Bursary Fund (BBF)

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) is a member-based, provincial umbrella organization that provides training, resources, support and advocacy to anti-violence workers in Women's Transition Housing and Supports Programs, and Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) and Violence is Preventable (VIP) Programs. BCSTH has approximately 130 members, supporting over 220 transition housing programs including Transition Houses, Second and Third Stage Houses, Safe Homes and Long-Term housing projects. There are 87 PEACE Programs across BC, which provide free, confidential support to children and youth who have experienced violence in their homes. Fifty-one PEACE Programs also deliver the VIP Program - a school-based violence prevention and intervention initiative in BC.

The collective expertise of the BCSTH membership, grounded in first-hand knowledge of the most pressing needs of women impacted by violence, led to the development of the BCSTH Bursary Fund (BBF) in 2019. The BBF was set up to support women with experiences of violence to access a bursary for education and employment opportunities that enhance their job-related skills and credentials. The goal of the BBF is to increase BC women's³ capacity to become financially independent so that they can support themselves and their dependents and lead safe, meaningful, productive lives. Bursaries are one-time only and range from \$500 to \$3,000 CAD. They are given without expectation or requirement of repayment. Women are given autonomy to use the funds as they see fit to fulfill their goals and this freedom to choose is central to the women-centred support that the BBF offers.

To be eligible, applicants must be 18 or older, have accessed services from BCSTH member programs within the past two years and have been nominated by a staff member at a BCSTH member program. They also need to be able to demonstrate a)

need for the courses/activities/services/materials they will use the bursary for and b) how this will create education and training opportunities that will enhance their job-related skills and credentials and increase their capacity to support themselves and any dependents to have safe, meaningful and enjoyable lives.

Eligible expenses include:

- Tuition fees for a certificate, diploma or degree course from an accredited institution.
- Applying for recognition of credentials and/or qualifications from other provinces and/or countries.
- Equipment necessary for employment (including self-employment) or training (such as tools for woodwork, metalwork or catering), clothing (such as protective clothing or uniforms), or study aids (such as computers, books or other school supplies).
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as facemasks, face shields or other supplies required for business, employment or education purposes.
- Childcare services or transportation costs (e.g., bus pass, car insurance) to assist a woman to access training or education courses or work experience opportunities.

Importantly, the BBF application process uses a trauma- and violence-informed approach and is designed to be collaborative and empowering; women who are eligible for the fund work together with their support worker to complete an application form and workers provide a letter of recommendation. Confirmation of expense costs are required and women can choose to submit an optional cover letter stating why they are a good candidate for the bursary if they want to. Applications are reviewed by the BBF committee comprising of the BCSTH team and Board of Directors and, if deemed necessary, a conversational, trauma- and violence-informed

³ The term "women" refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women. BCSTH recognizes that while intimate partner violence has significant impacts on cis-gender women and girls in Canada, 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately impacted by experiences of violence.

follow-up telephone or Zoom interview may be conducted. The BBF Information Sheet and Application Form are available in [Appendices B and C](#).

The BBF is reliant on donations and grants and the amount of money available per year fluctuates and impacts the number of bursaries that can be offered. Since the BBF's inception in 2019, a total of more than \$330,685 CAD has been awarded to 120 women from a diverse range of backgrounds from all regions of BC (figure 1), and has indirectly benefited 170 children and youth between the ages of 3-months to 19-years (average age = 7.5 years) and supported ten independent small businesses. However, there are not enough funds to meet the full demand; in it's first year, BCSTH was unable to fund 29 applications and has since had to limit the number of applications per member organization per year. The number that this is capped at depends on the amount of funds available each year.

Bursary Recipients by Region (%)

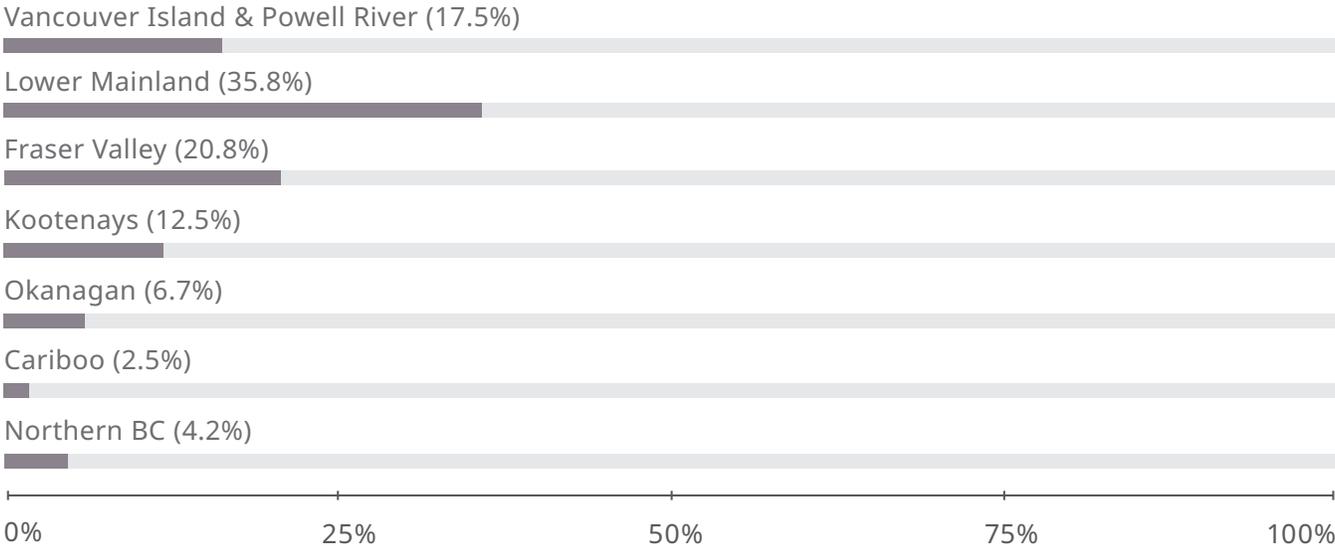


Figure 1: Bursary recipients by region

Education & Employment Bursaries by Sector (%)

Recipients to date have applied for bursaries to support them to pursue education and employment initiatives in a wide range of sectors, predominantly the community and social services sector (29.2%) and the health sector (22.5%) (Figure 2).

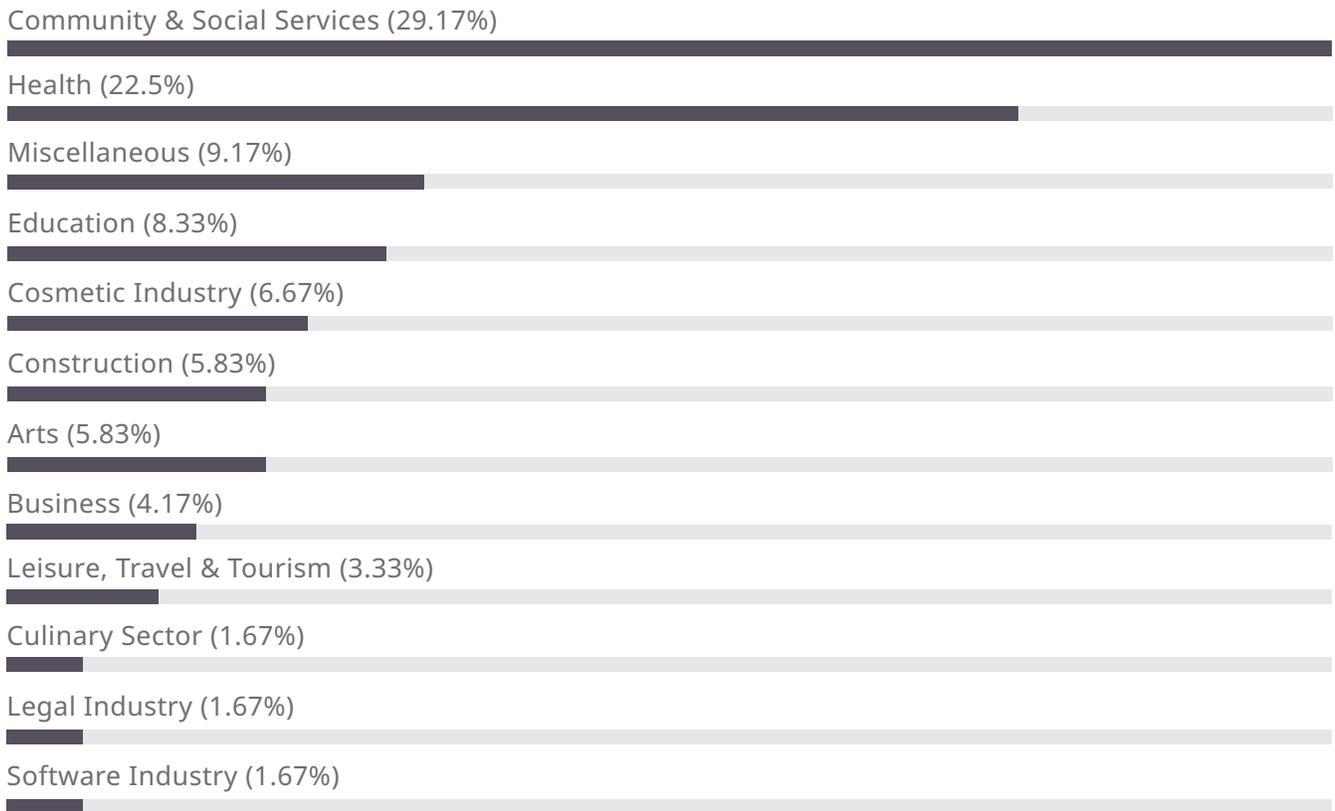


Figure 2: Bursary applications by sector

More than half of bursary recipients to date have applied for funds to pursue opportunities within the community and social services and health sectors.

Bursary Recipients' Education History (%)

At the time of applying, bursary recipients' education history ranged from no high school diploma (5.8%) to post-graduate degree (5.8%) with the most common level of education achieved being trade/technical or vocational training (35%) (Figure 3).

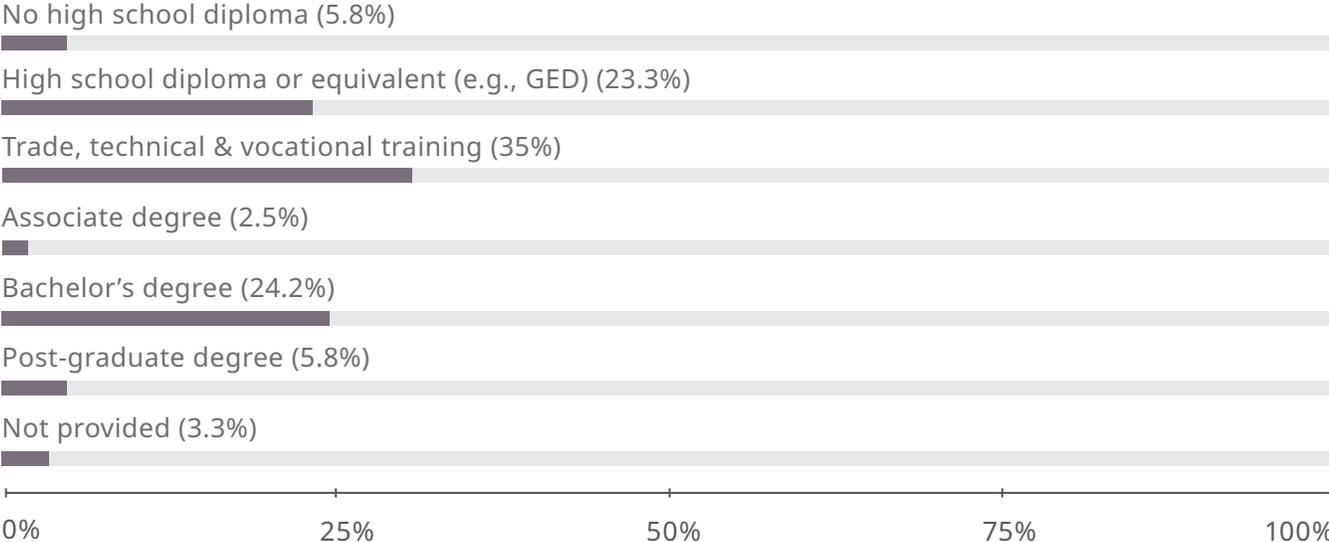


Figure 3: Bursary recipients' education history

BCSTH invites all recipients to complete a short, anonymous online feedback survey about their experiences of applying for and receiving the bursary. To date, 17 bursary recipients have shared feedback this way and some key learnings include:

- All but two of these bursary recipients were able to use the funds in the way that they had planned to when they applied (88.2%). One recipient had not yet spent their bursary.
- The majority of these recipients used the bursary for tuition (10), followed by vehicle expenses (3), study aids (3), training (3), childcare (2), business startup expenses (1), tools and materials to continue working (1), repaying student loans (1) and living expenses (1).
- When asked how receiving the bursary impacted recipients' lives, responses included that it was an **encouraging** experience for survivors (9), for example it instilled hope, confidence, encouraged them to pursue their dreams, get closer to achieving their goals and overcome challenges. It also **reduced stress** (8) including by reducing their financial burden, enabling them to keep their job, and reducing anxiety. **Positive impacts on children** were also mentioned (7); survivors reported being able to provide for their children better, spend more time together, show them that anything is possible and even enabled one mother to stay in the country with her child. Finally, the bursary was reported to **increase self-sufficiency** (6) by enabling women to focus on their studies and pursue their careers.
- Suggestions for improvements included more clarity to explain that the bursary, depending on its use, may be considered taxable income (2). This feedback was provided following the BBF's first year and has since been actioned by BCSTH. Another recommendation was to change the interview to rely more on the support worker instead of an interview panel (1).

BCSTH Bursary Fund Evaluation: Key Findings

In the current evaluation, anti-violence workers who supported a woman to successfully apply for a bursary, and bursary recipients (minus 2 who declined follow-up contact in their bursary application) were invited to participate in the following evaluation activities:

1. Online evaluation survey for anti-violence workers ([Appendix D](#)) to gather feedback about the process of supporting a woman to apply for a bursary and any impacts this had on their job satisfaction.
2. Follow-up focus groups ([Appendix E](#)) with willing anti-violence workers who completed the online survey.
3. Online evaluation survey to bursary recipients ([Appendix F](#)) to find out about their experiences of applying for and receiving a bursary, how they used it and any impacts it had on their lives and the lives of any dependents.
4. Follow-up individual interviews with willing bursary recipients ([Appendix G](#)) who completed the online survey.

Online Survey Feedback from Anti-Violence Workers

One-hundred and four anti-violence workers who supported one or more survivors to successfully apply for a BBF bursary since the program was implemented in 2019 were invited by email to complete an online survey regarding their experiences. Twelve emails were unable to be delivered (11.5%). Twenty-eight anti-violence workers responded to the survey (26.9%), of which two responses were only partially complete.

Demographics

The majority of survey respondents were aged between 40-49 years old (figure 4) and were of Caucasian/White ethno-cultural identity (figure 5). Half of respondents had worked in the anti-violence sector for between 1-5 years, more than one third had worked in the sector for 11 years or longer (35.7%) and the remainder had worked in the sector for between 6-10 years (14.3%).

Demographics

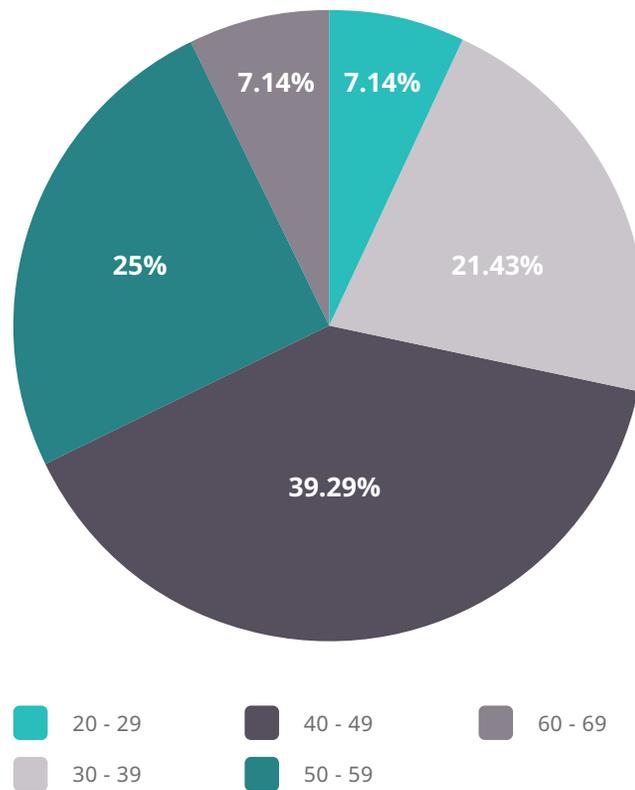


Figure 4: Anti-violence workers by age group (%) (Total = 28)

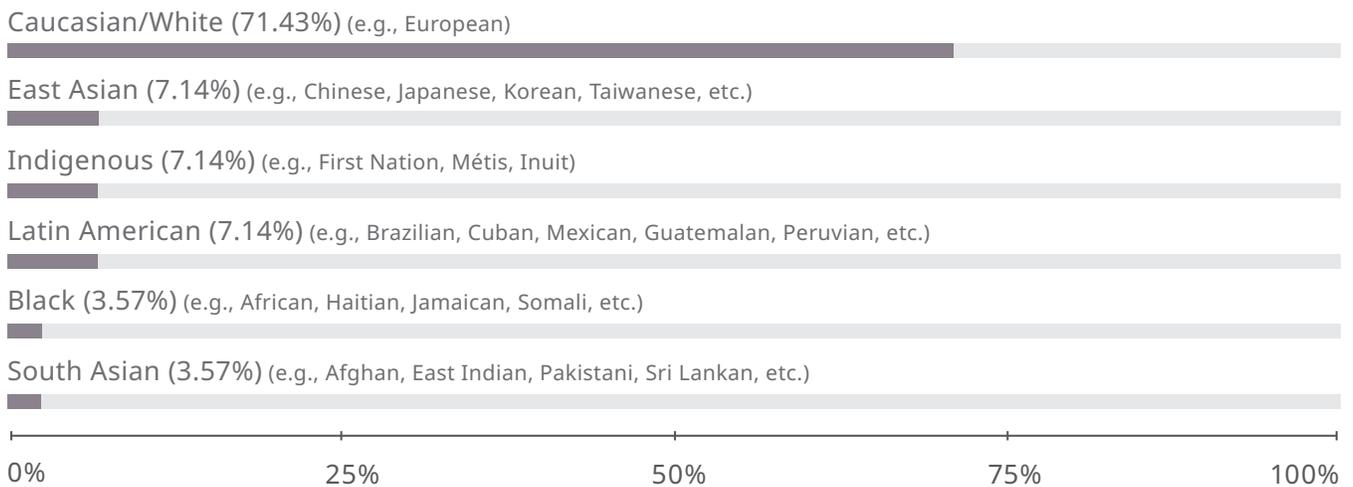


Figure 5: Anti-violence workers' ethno-cultural identity (%) (Total=28)

Survey respondents worked across of a range of BCSTH member programs and other programs as displayed in figure 6, most commonly in Transition Houses, Second Stage Houses and PEACE Programs. Almost 40 per cent of these programs were located in large cities (populations of 100,000 and over) (39.3%), with 25 per cent located in medium cities (populations between 30,000 and 99,999) and the same amount in small towns (populations between 5,000 and 29,999). Just over ten per cent of programs were located in small towns with populations of up to 5,000 people (10.7%). Anti-violence workers working in programs located in all regions of BC except for the Cariboo region responded to the survey, the majority of whom worked in programs located in BC’s Lower Mainland (35.7%) and Vancouver Island (28.6%) (figure 7).

Program Type	No. of respondents
<i>BCSTH Member Programs</i>	
<i>Transition Houses</i>	10
<i>Second Stage Houses</i>	9
<i>PEACE Programs</i>	9
<i>Third Stage Houses</i>	3
<i>Safe Homes</i>	1
<i>BCSTH Member Programs</i>	
<i>Stopping the Violence (STV)</i>	4
<i>Legal Supports Programs</i>	3
<i>Homelessness Prevention Programs</i>	2
<i>Outreach/Support Services/Employment Program</i>	2
<i>Community-based victims services</i>	1

Figure 6: Anti-violence workers by program type (Total = 28)

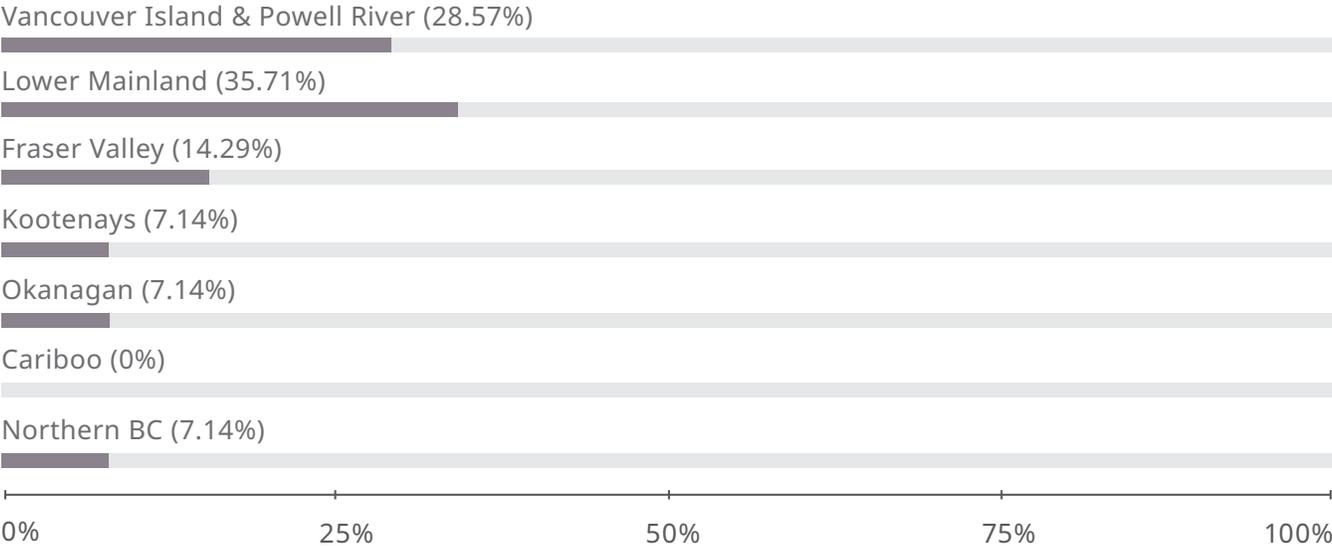


Figure 7: Anti-violence workers by regions in BC (%) (Total=28)

BBF Applications: Background Information

Fifty per cent of respondents reported that they heard about the BBF through the BCSTH newsletter. This was followed by BCSTH listservs (28.6%), from a co-worker (25%), BCSTH website (10.7%) and emails (7.1%). The vast majority of respondents reported that they felt excited when they heard about the BBF initiative (78.6%) and the remainder reported that they felt interested (21.4%).

“I thought this was a great opportunity to help our clients reach goals, we could otherwise not help with. And such a needed win after so much loss, heartbreak and hardship. Like a real glimmer of hope.”

- Anti-Violence Worker; Respondent 6

“It seemed like an exciting opportunity for a resident who was hoping to go back to school, but identified so many barriers to that actualization. When my co-worker explained that she had been successful in aiding a past resident to receive funding and continue in her studies, I became even more excited at the possibility.”

- Anti-Violence Worker; Respondent 20

The average number of survivors that respondents had supported to apply for a bursary over the five years since the program started was 2.7 (range = 1-10) and the average number of successful

applicants was 1.9 (range = 1-4). Figure 8 displays the years in which survey respondents had supported women to successfully apply for a bursary, as well as the total number of successful bursary applications each year. Anti-violence workers who had supported women to apply for and receive a bursary in the previous two years were more likely to respond to the survey, which may be reflective of the current high staff turnover rates within the anti-violence sector. For example, the attrition rate of Executive Directors within BCSTH member programs between April-October 2023 is 12.3 per cent and for PEACE Program counsellors this figure sits at 32 per cent from December 2022-December 2023. This is a structural issue that is felt across the wider anti-violence sector. Women’s Shelters Canada’s Feminist Brain Drain study reports that between September 1, 2021 - August 31, 2022, 243 shelters and transition houses who responded to their survey saw 1,300 frontline staff and 126 managers or executive directors leave their organization, and at the time of the survey there were 455 frontline vacancies and 54 management vacancies (WSC, 2022). When asked about the reason for leaving a position, 31 per cent cited the hours, 29 per cent burnout, and 23 per cent the workload. More than a quarter of survey respondents (28%) indicated that they thought about quitting their job and almost one-third (32%) reported that they worked an additional job to supplement their income.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Survey Respondents	7	7	8	16	11
Total Successful Applications	24	26	26	24	20
Percentage	29.2	26.9	30.8	66.7	55.0

Figure 8: Number of anti-violence workers responding to the survey who supported women to apply for a bursary in each calendar year, compared with total number of successful applicants each year

Almost all respondents stated that they supported women to apply for the funds so that they could go to school, continue education or training they were already enrolled in, or go back to school for further education or training. Two respondents supported women who applied for the bursary to start their own business. Specific areas of training and education noted included nursing or the health field more generally, legal training, culinary school, esthetician training, life coaching and music school, with one respondent stating that the woman she supported **“was able to use the funds to take a course that would support the career of her dreams.”** Another noted that **“this training allowed for a flexible stream of income to pursue around parenting”** and a third explained that **“I supported a client to apply and it led her to more feelings of empowerment, hope, and independence.”**

“The women I helped were really happy and relieved to receive [the bursary]. Finances are a huge reason why a lot of women stay with their abusers because they can’t afford to live on their own, but funds like this really help empower them and allow them to live away from their abusers.”

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 18

When asked if they were aware of any other financial assistance initiatives like the BBF, twenty-two respondents said they were not (78.6%). The remaining six (21.4%) said they were and cited the following sources:

- The YWCA National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (the NESS Fund).
- The Single Mother’s Support Fund (Cause We Care Foundation).
- The Soroptimist International Live Your Dreams Award.
- The Amy Dalglish Memorial Bursary (Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, PIRS) for immigrant and refugee women who require financial support to pursue education/ training opportunities to upgrade skills and employability. Bursaries range from \$500-\$1,000.⁴

A couple of respondents also mentioned universities or being unsure of exact funding sources but occasionally receiving emails with information about similar funding opportunities.

⁴ According to the Vancity Community Foundation website, at the time of writing this bursary is being revised and will not be offered until further notice.

Impacts of Receiving a Bursary for Women

Anti-violence workers responding to the evaluation survey were asked to share any impacts the bursary has had for the women they supported. Four main themes emerged in the responses: improved well-being, improved financial stability, hope and encouragement, and increased safety. **Improved-well-being** was the most common theme (12 out of 28 comments), with responses including increased self-worth, improved mood, more positivity, increased confidence, reduced financial stress, feeling validated and supported, and gaining a sense of pride due to being able to provide for their children.

"I think this had a positive impact on their mental health because finances are a huge stressor in a lot of my clients' lives."

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 18

Improved financial stability was the next most common theme (11 comments) and included being able to afford rent, repay debts, get a job/higher paying job or return to work, being better able to support their children, no longer being financially dependent on their abuser, and improved focus and ability to concentrate on the future.

"This is vital for many individuals to continue to keep building their independence after experiencing violence. This program supports individuals in being able to become more financially secure and continue to build their future."

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 24

Under the theme of **hope and encouragement** (9 comments), bursary recipients were reportedly encouraged to set more goals, start or re-establish their businesses, finish their degrees, leave their abusers, move away, make a fresh start, and to feel that there was space to support their own goals as well as the needs of their children.

"The [woman] shared that after many, many years of working on her [degree] and the associated financial challenges and hardship, she hadn't been sure if she was going to be able to continue, and receiving the bursary, although a relatively small amount, convinced her it was both reasonable and possible to continue and attempt to actually finish the degree."

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 14

Finally, four comments related to **increased safety**, improved living situations and not having to return to the abuser due to no longer being financially dependent on them.

"The [woman] has broken free from the abuse and has been able to reestablish her business and has improved her safety."

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 4

Impacts for Workers

Survey respondents were also asked about the impacts of supporting women to receive a bursary on their job satisfaction. All respondents⁵ (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that the BBF Program gave them hope for the women they supported, made them feel like they were making a real difference in the lives of the women they supported, and enhanced their overall job satisfaction. The vast majority of respondents also strongly agreed or agreed that supporting women to receive the bursary made them feel more motivated and more confident in their work (92.3% and 84.6% respectively) (figure 9).

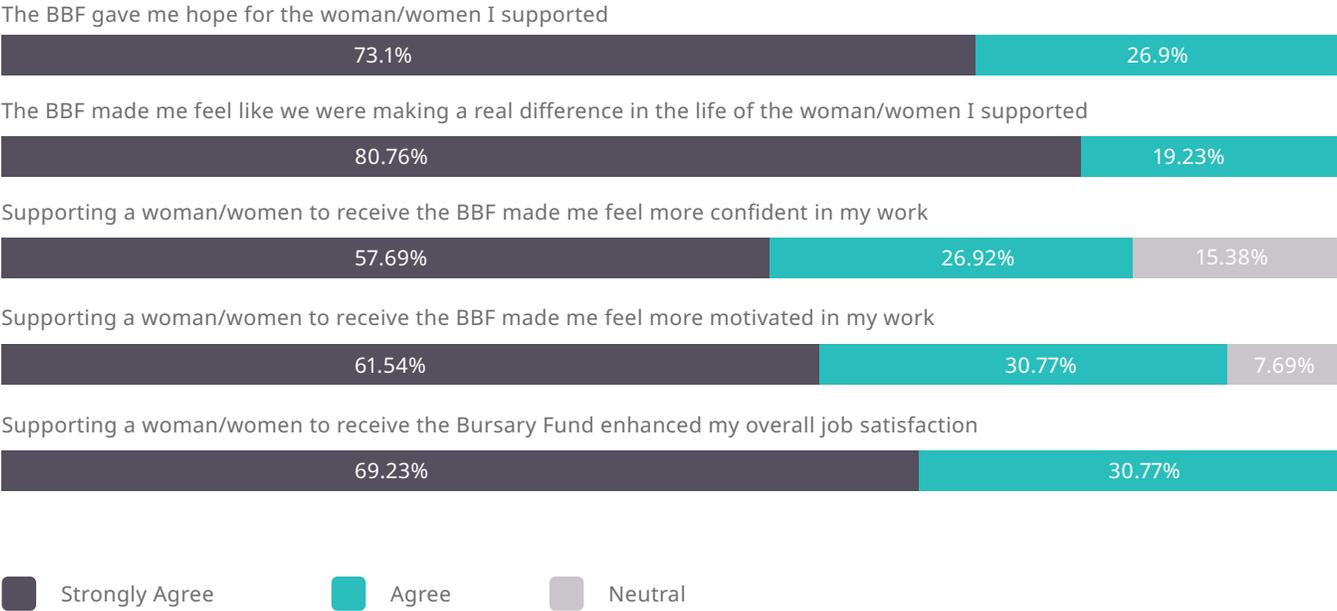


Figure 9: Impacts of the BBF Program on anti-violence workers' job satisfaction (%) (Total=26)

⁵Two respondents did not answer the question in this section of the survey, therefore total respondents = 26

Further comments regarding the impacts of supporting women to successfully apply for the bursary on job satisfaction showed that the process of supporting women to receive a bursary was **rewarding and satisfying**, with many sharing that it felt exciting, motivating, boosted their confidence and provided them with a sense of accomplishment. Several respondents specifically mentioned that it felt good to be able to offer something practical and tangible and that allowed them to see the immediate results of their work, which can be unusual for those working in programs where they only work with women for a short amount of time.

“We all enter this area of work [be]cause we care and hope to bring some light and change to those we work with. We can’t always see the impact of what we do but when we can assist with something like this the immediate smiles and self esteem boost is so rewarding”

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 2

The offer of a financial support to assist women with the next steps of her journey beyond her time in the program was also noted to be rewarding for workers and could provide them with a **sense of relief**.

“I felt like there was hope for the women because when they felt relieved to receive this bursary, it gave me relief knowing they were satisfied especially after going through so much and having that affect their mental health.”

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 18

Finally, some respondents commented that providing women with a letter of recommendation that highlighted her strengths was an **empowering experience** for the women, as was providing them with the funds directly so that they could decide for themselves how best to allocate them to achieve their goals. The process of supporting women to apply for and receive a bursary was also reported to strengthen the relationship between workers and their clients by some respondents.

“I would also let [my clients] read my letter of recommendation, which would highlight their strengths and hopes. Often clients would tear up when reading the letter. Telling a client [that] they received the bursary felt like something we could really celebrate together...I LOVE boosting up [recipients] in this very tangible and needed way.”

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 6

Satisfaction with the BBF Application & Implementation Process

Feedback regarding the BBF application and implementation process was very positive; all survey respondents⁶ reported that they were either very satisfied (73.1%) or satisfied (26.9%) with the BBF application process. The vast majority rated the support they received from BCSTH during the application process as very helpful (65.4%) or helpful (23.1%) (two rated this as neutral and one said it was not applicable). And almost ninety per cent of respondents strongly agreed (61.4%) or agreed (26.9%) that the women they supported received the funds in a quick and straightforward manner (the remaining three respondents rated this as neutral, said they did not know, or disagreed).

Survey respondents were asked to explain a bit about how they/their agency decided which women to nominate to receive the bursary. Most responses related to women who had clear education/training/employment goals and/or who were already enrolled in a training or education program but were experiencing financial barriers to achieving this. Several respondents said they nominated women who were experiencing multiple barriers e.g., a lack of family or other support, low education level, mental health challenges or age. On a similar note, some respondents said they nominated women who they know well and whose situation they knew well, or the women that they felt would benefit from the bursary the most. A few people said they nominated women who had children or who were at a higher risk of violence and could use the bursary to help distance them from their abuser and/or to increase safety for themselves and their children; one person said they would prioritize women with clear education or training goals and then nominate the woman who was moving out of the program first. Finally, some respondents simply said they nominated whomever met the criteria or identified a need.

When asked for suggestions regarding ways the BBF Program could be improved, survey respondents suggested the following:

- The application could be intimidating for women to do alone; therefore, support from an anti-violence worker is recommended. This can take some time and some way to represent this work in the funders' reporting requirements such as the BC Housing or MPSSG quarterly statistics forms might be useful;
- Increasing the bursary limit to one application per member program;
- The application was submitted via email; it could be helpful to have a simple form to submit online and track the progress of the application;
- Make the application shorter / more streamlined / available in other languages;
- Publicize in advance a schedule of when bursaries will become available and how many so that members can look ahead and prepare with program participants, and give advanced warning if deadlines will be extended.

"I love this funding. It feels so good to be able to offer something concrete and tangible to our families. We don't always know our impact, so as a worker in this field it really helps me as well. I feel very proud when one of my clients receives the bursary."

- Anti-violence Worker; Respondent 6

⁶Two respondents did not answer the questions in this section of the survey, therefore total respondents = 26.

Focus Groups Feedback from Anti-Violence Workers

Eighteen anti-violence workers who responded to the online survey indicated that they would like to be contacted with more information regarding participating in a focus group. Of those, nine workers ended up participating in one of two online focus groups via Zoom to gather deeper insight and feedback regarding the BBF Program. (Focus group questions are available in [appendix E](#)). Focus group discussions provided feedback on the application process, any impacts the workers were aware that the bursary has had for the women they support to apply and any dependent children they may have, as well as impacts of this program for workers themselves. Suggestions for improving the program were also sought. The following section of this report describes this feedback in detail.

Feedback on the application process

Overall, the application process was a straightforward and worthwhile exercise

Overall, workers described the application process as straightforward and manageable, with one worker emphasising that she appreciated the trauma-informed approach.

“...if I had a question, I got an email back right away and vice versa if I missed something on the application or the [BCSTH] had questions it wasn't like, 'oh, you missed this on your application. You don't qualify for this.' Of course there was a deadline to have everything in, but if we missed something like it was, it was easy to go back and communicate about it, which some grants and funds if you miss something or you miss a deadline, you don't qualify or you lose that opportunity, right?”

- Focus Group 1

That said, some workers found **the application could be quite a lot of work**. For example, a couple of people mentioned technological challenges when it came to uploading files for itemized costs in the correct format, or time taken to gather all of the necessary documentation and research programmes and costs, though one worker also described this as a beneficial process:

“The part that I think took a lot more, I guess, mind power from our participant was where we had to look up the programs and the costs and everything... And I think that was a big eye opener for her, having never done anything like that before. So, it was hard but was also I think a really good positive reality check and a good starting place to realize what it is like to start looking ahead for your future and school and apartments and having to move [away] for school and, so kind of really started the gears rolling from like from a very beginning place. Yeah, so in the end, yes, it was more work than, I guess, maybe anticipated but good work. Like important work.”

- Focus Group 2

There appeared to be variation in how much of this task workers took on, as well as in the amount of support different women required, with some anti-violence workers mentioning how much the trauma and violence impacted the women they supported in terms of being able to focus on the application requirements.

“The other biggest challenge was, in particular one of the recipients, you know, just in her trauma of just getting her to like focus and send me what I needed, you know. That was about...the most challenging part...”

- Focus Group 1

Some stated that this task was **manageable due to the infrequency of the application rounds to date** and the timing of when these have taken place:

“I think because it’s not constant...it takes up only that like quarter of time throughout the year when you are helping a client apply. I found it manageable during the time because it also came at a time where it wasn’t like near Christmas where it’s obviously a lot busier, or like I didn’t have a lot of moves with clients going on at that time, so it wasn’t overwhelming...But it would be nice if it was accessible a couple more times throughout the year since we do have such a turnaround with clients.”

- Focus Group 2

Finally, supporting women to complete the application was deemed a worthwhile endeavour by many, and there was doubt as to whether women would have submitted this by themselves.

“Some of the women that were successful probably wouldn’t have felt they deserved it and wouldn’t have done it on their own. So, I think for me it’s worth my time to say that ‘you are worth it and let’s do it’, you know. Like, without that, I don’t know that they would have felt confident enough to do it so, in terms of time, I think it’s well worth

it because it is shifting the dynamic of their life, of building hope and positivity, and that they can and then they are worth it. So, from a mental health perspective I think it’s just well worth it.”

- Focus Group 1

Feedback about the nomination process

We were interested in what the process was like for workers when choosing a woman to nominate and how different programs may go about this. Focus group participants explained that they nominated **women who were most in need** in terms of financial hardship, and who may be **working towards specific goals** that fit the BBF criteria. **Timing of the application round** was also a factor, in terms of whether women felt it was the right time for them to take this on, as well as selecting from women they were working with at the time they got the notification that the bursary fund was available. While some workers who were already aware of the bursary fund kept previous program participants in mind in case the opportunity to apply came up again, the consensus was that if this was a rolling opportunity throughout the year, workers would encounter more women who would be eligible and applicable.

The number of women a BCSTH member agency can nominate to apply for a bursary was capped after the first year of running the program due to BCSTH receiving more applications than they could fund and having to turn down 29 applications. The number this is capped at varies each year depending on the amount of funds available. While most workers said they did not experience competition within their agency regarding who to nominate, largely because it felt like there was a lack of awareness about the program among workers, as discussed below, one worker described facing a difficult situation when deciding who to nominate.

“I had two clients who were almost like cookie cutter same situation...they both moved from the

same country and they were here on like a student visa finishing their degrees. They both came to our transition house on the same day. And I was like, how am I supposed to like pick between these two because they're both amazing and they're both so hard-working and they're both single moms... We ended up having to sit both of them down... to figure out who wanted to apply and I did say... sometimes it comes up like once or twice a year so next time maybe we can like apply for you...It was not fun."

- Focus Group 2

Barriers to supporting women to apply for a bursary

While BCSTH had to limit the number of applications member agencies can submit due to demand outweighing financial capacity in the BBF Program's first year, and while all available funds have been utilised at each application round to date, participants in focus group 1 described a **lack of awareness and understanding of the BBF Program among anti-violence workers**. For example, there appears to be confusion among workers regarding who is eligible to apply i.e., whether only BCSTH member programs are eligible, or all programs within BCSTH member agencies. A lack of awareness of the program was deemed, at least partly, due to the fact that programs that are not under BCSTH' portfolio (e.g., Stopping the Violence, Sexual Assault, and Community Based RCMP Programs) don't receive BCSTH's communications emails. Participants also questioned whether this may be down to differences in administrative practices within agencies and programs impacting how widely information is shared. High rates of staff turnover within the sector were also identified as a reason for this.

"I think I saw a printed off email on our boardroom table and said, 'hey, what's this? And can I recommend any of my clients for this?' Initially, I think I was told, no, they have to be, would have had to access the transition house in order to apply. And I think that was a couple years ago. And then I just kept, you know, asking and then for whatever reason I started getting emails about it. So, it's like, oh, okay, cool. I'm gonna do this."

- Focus Group 1

This confusion likely also results from variation in implementation of the BBF Program depending on the funds available each year. The BBF eligibility criteria stipulates that women should have accessed BCSTH member programs within the past 2 years. While BCSTH prioritizes applications from their member programs, if funds are available, they will also be flexible to include other programs within BCSTH member agencies.

One participant felt that **perceived competition** may also deter some workers from applying if they don't believe they have a high chance of success.

Impacts of the bursary for women & their children

Encouraged women to take the first step or keep going to reach their goals

A short-term impact of the bursary that workers observed for the women they supported was that it encouraged them to take the first big step needed to move towards their goals. For example, it provided women with financial support to **overcome bug hurdles** and was described as **“scaffolding to get to where they want and believe that they can get there”**. Being accepted for the bursary provided women with a **confidence boost** and knowing that there were people who believed in them was reported to be **encouraging**.

“I think it helps them take the first step because... when I think of the young girl that’s becoming an RN you know, she she’s a hard worker. She was already doing the care aid...and had been working here in this community. But to get a damage deposit and the first month’s rent and uniforms for the RN, and the nursing school, to move to that new community, it was that like ‘how do I overcome that big first hurdle?’ And so, it really was the impetus to help her just like, ‘oh my gosh...I won’t starve and I can focus on schooling and I don’t have to work like over time’, you know, just took the pressure off. So, you know, for that, to me that was the impetus and that really helped catapult her to success for that.”

- Focus Group 1

For other women, it **enabled them not to have to quit** courses they were already pursuing but could no longer afford, and provided one young woman with the means to enhance her work experience and then reapply for a university course she was not successful in getting on to a year earlier.

“...one who was towards the end of her PhD, she was saying, you know, like I was looking at having to stop if this hadn’t come along. I was looking at having to have come this far and then leaving it. So,...she was able to continue on and keep working on it...So, I’m certainly very well aware of the fact

that...it did feel like it was part of that package of ‘here, we’ve, we’ve turned the corner’ kind of thing.”

- Focus Group 2

Improved mental health & well-being

Even though the bursaries are relatively modest amounts of up to \$3,000 CAD and it was acknowledged that for many women their financial struggles did continue, the bursary was described as **a ‘buffer’ and a ‘safety net’ that provided stress relief and took pressure off of women financially**.

The **flexibility of the funds** and the fact that there were no reporting requirements was reported to be a key factor in this. For example, women were able to purchase necessities, pay their rent or pay for childcare to allow them to work more and workers reported that this **lifted a huge weight off women’s shoulders**.

“For a few of my clients, it’s meant that they 1) haven’t had to return to their abuser and 2) it’s like a weight off their shoulders of not having to worry about that extra money financially. So, they’re able to pay for rent. They’re able to pay for their groceries. They’re able to, you know, buy school supplies for them and also for their children if their children are in school. And it’s a way that they’re able to be more independent away from their abuser because they no longer are relying on them for an income source if it is to like further their employment. So, a few of them have said that it was like a huge weight off of their shoulders that they weren’t having to worry so much about that type of stuff.”

- Focus Group 2

Receiving the money directly was reported to boost women's confidence and self-esteem by providing choice and agency over how they utilised it, with one worker describing it as **"money with dignity because it's not tied to anything"**. This was also paramount to enabling women to break free from abusers as they could use the money for rent.

Enhanced Safety

Several workers reported instances where women **did not have to reconnect with their abuser** to ask for money, or return to living with them because they were **able to use the funds in a flexible way that allowed them to live independently**. For example, one woman who was behind on rent was able to delay being evicted until she found more secure housing. Some women were able to relocate and one was able to leave her abuser and re-establish her business without him knowing.

"The woman that I supported was really struggling to find independence... Although she originally planned to go back to school with [the bursary], it actually gave her some money that she could rent a place by herself and move out and not have to go back... And she's now... found her way into the job that she wanted but without using the money for that specific thing."

- Focus Group 2

Regardless of exactly how women chose to utilise the funds, the fact that they had more money available that could go towards their rent if needed again reduced financial stress and enabled them to both pay rent and not go without basic necessities or purchase what they needed to be successful in their education or employment goals.

"I think through the process of it, having those extra funds, whether they're putting it towards a laptop or clothing or childcare or transportation it just gives them a little bit more money that can go towards their rent so they're not so worried... [For one woman] it just opened another door for

her and she didn't have to think do I have to put money towards rent or go without a laptop? So, it just gave her that little extra lift to be able to put money for her to be successful in her program."

- Focus Group 1

Success & Independence

In the longer term, the bursary was also reported to have enhanced women's safety and housing security through supporting them to maintain their financial independence. Most workers talked about **successes** that the bursary has led to for women that have **supported their independence**. This included things like having almost completed degrees, broken free from their abusers, reclaimed or started new businesses, pursuing further education or being established in their careers.

"One pursued her goal of starting her own business with the bursary that she needed to help sort of finalize and I haven't spoken to her in a few months, which is good because for me, when...my clients don't come back it's a good thing sometimes, but I do see this woman in community. She's doing extremely well."

- Focus Group 1

For some women, this has led to them **giving back within their communities**, for example through volunteering within programs at the agency or the wider community or pursuing opportunities within the community and social services sector.

"She kind of like continued to evolve and eventually wanting to do her master's in social work which it's so amazing...It's so needed to have like lived experience and, and women who have kind of been through the system to, to yeah to be able to take on those roles."

- Focus Group 2

Impacts of the BBF Program for Anti-Violence Workers

Knowing there is hope boosts staff morale

Being able to offer women money with no strings attached was reported to be an **empowering and motivating experience** for workers that boosts staff morale.

"I mean, I think it's pretty empowering to be able to offer somebody you know money with no strings attached. I feel like it's very empowering, it motivates you to you know, kind of work, wanna do more work ...it's good for morale I think, for staff morale cause you're very tangibly doing something, you know, like sometimes our work, you don't see it, but like when someone is able to get a bursary, it's very tangible so that's just nice."

- Focus Group 2

Workers we spoke to reported feeling **'excited'** when they are notified that applications will be opening and **'proud'** when a woman they have nominated is successful. Many referred to this as a **'feel good'** experience, noting that in their work they don't often get the opportunity to offer something tangible and concrete to women and sharing that **"it's a nice feeling just knowing there is hope."**

"In a world of like so much darkness, it is that hope. Like for me for my own mental health the excitement of 'oh this is practical help that can really, really, really help you, you know, overcome a little barrier'. And so, for me as a worker just, it's like the good spark of like I can help them dream and help them envision, and the support of this financial, practical, tangible thing that isn't just sitting in an office saying, 'okay well, now go to all these different pathways where some people say, no, not the right door,' you know? Like, like you're actually really helping them and so that is such a feel-good."

- Focus Group 1

Supporting women to apply can strengthen rapport

A few workers also talked about ways in which the program can strengthen rapport with women. For example, by getting to know them away from their abuse through focussing on their interests and goals, as well as by maintaining connection with them beyond their time in the program if they reach back out when the fund reopens.

"It was really nice getting to know clients away from their abuse cause a lot of them were talking about stuff that they were really passionate about pursuing or something that they had like dreamed of doing before everything had happened and they just thought wasn't a possibility after like their situation...it was just nice getting to know them away from that and not feeling like there was a weird power dynamic as there can kind of be when you're a support worker... And seeing how excited they got when they did get it. I remember I emailed one of them when they got it and she called me crying and it was just like 'I'm so happy for you,' so it's really nice."

- Focus Group 2

Suggested Improvements

Within focus group 1, a key theme that arose with regards to improvements was to **advertise the program more**. Ideas of how this could be done included through promoting it at conferences, delivering a webinar about the program, and distributing posters and pamphlets that can be displayed within programs and brought to team meetings for discussion. Within this, the need to **clarify who is eligible to nominate a woman to apply** was emphasised. This included encouraging new workers to apply, making clear that the program is open to women from all regions of BC and clarifying BCSTH member eligibility as discussed earlier in this section.

Other suggestions for improvements included having **more regular application rounds and increasing awareness of other, similar supports** available within BC and beyond that women can also apply for.

“Having the bursaries open throughout the year and knowing that maybe it’s...every 3 months or something so that when we are working with certain women who are maybe just coming in or on their way out we can know just timing wise who might you know fit and do well...it gives us a little bit more flexibility to think ahead or offer opportunities for somebody who’s really looking for something like that.”

- Focus Group 2

**The bursary
was described
by workers as
money with
dignity because
it is not tied to
anything.**

Online Survey Feedback from Bursary Recipients

Sixteen anti-violence workers who responded to the online survey reported that they were still in contact with one or more women who they had supported to successfully apply for a bursary. Between them, these workers had supported 26 women to successfully apply. These workers were approached and asked to safely reach out these women to invite them to participate in this evaluation project.

Of the remaining 95 bursary recipients, two had declined to be contacted for follow up after receiving the bursary. A brief email was sent to the remaining 93 recipients, which vaguely outlined the BBF evaluation research and asked these recipients to contact BCSTH if they were interested in learning more.

A total of 27 recipients responded to the survey, of which two responses were only partially complete.

Demographics

All bursary recipients identified as female. The majority were aged between 30-39 years (51.8%) (figure 10) and were of Caucasian/White ethno-cultural identity (figure 11).

Demographics

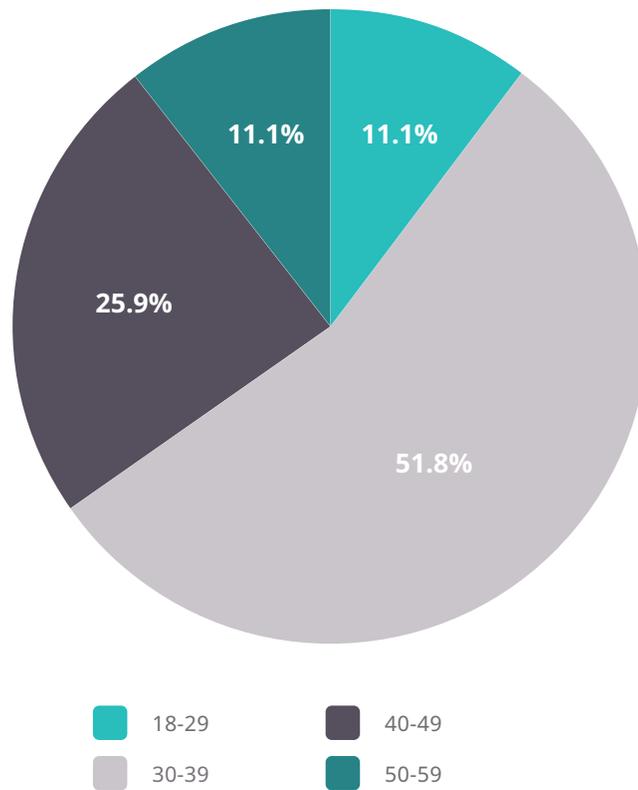


Figure 10: Please select your age category (%) (Total = 27)

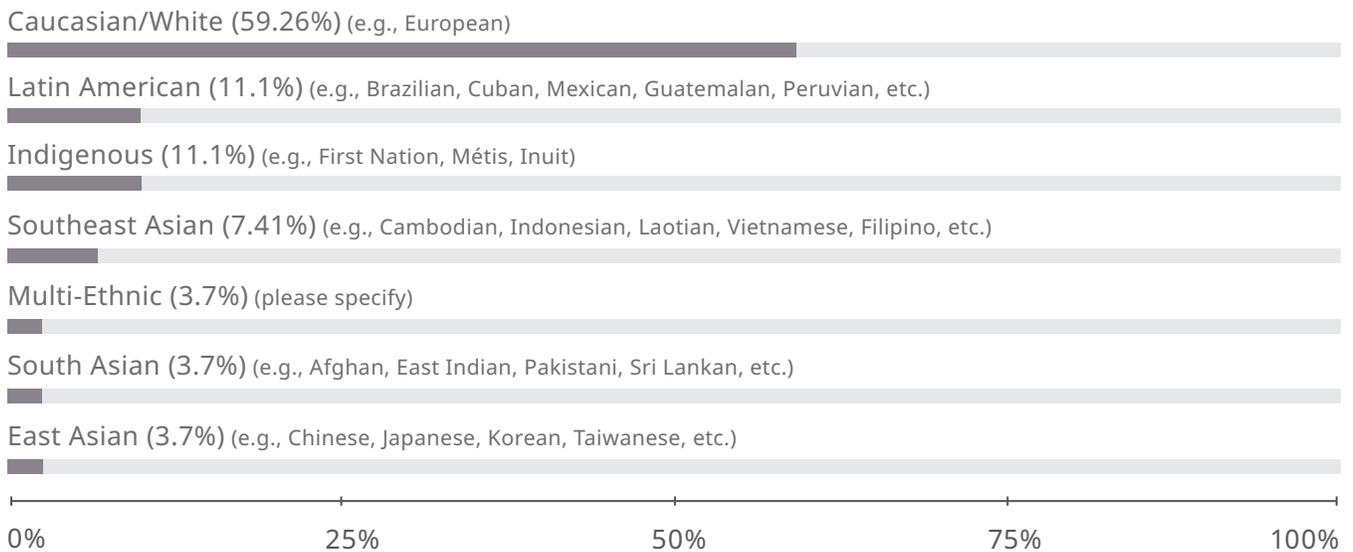
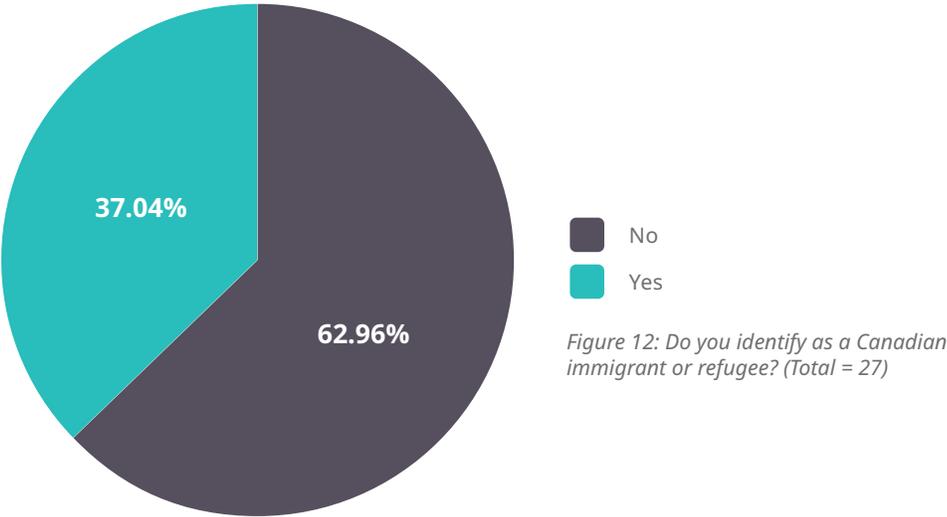
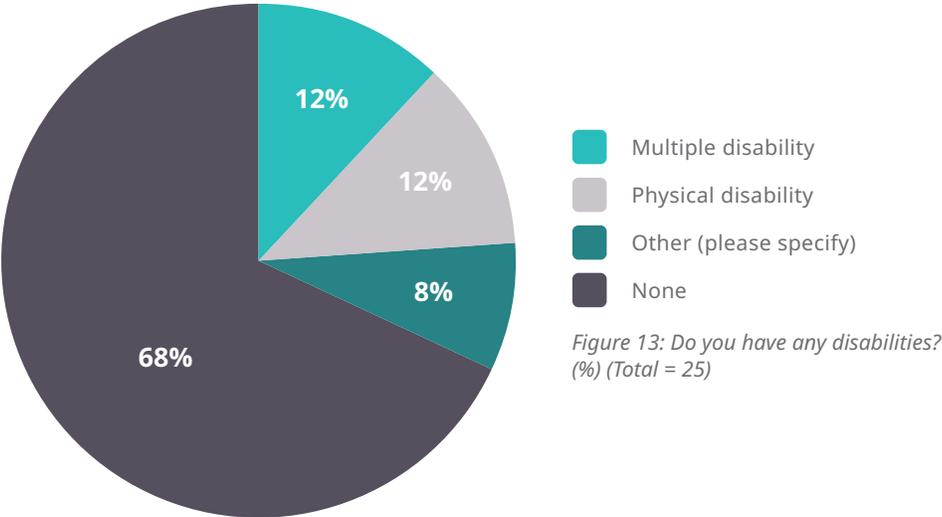


Figure 11: Please select the option that best reflects your ethno-cultural identity (%) (Total = 27)

Ten respondents, just over one third, identified as a Canadian immigrant or refugee (37%) (figure 12), of whom the majority (60%) had lived in Canada for between 6-10 years. One had lived in Canada for between 1-5 years and three had lived in Canada for 11 years or more.



Eight recipients (29.6%) reported that they have a disability or long-term health condition, including physical disability (3), multiple disabilities (3), heart disease (1) and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) (1). Two respondents did not answer this question (figure 13).



Just under one-third of bursary recipients who responded to this survey did not have any children (29.6%). The remaining nineteen recipients (70.4%) had 37 children between them (range = 1-5; median = 2). Two bursary recipients reported having other dependent family members including one parent and one spouse.

Education, Employment & Income

The most common level of education achieved by survey respondents was high school diploma or equivalent (25.9%), followed by trade/technical/vocational training and bachelor's degree (22.2% each) (figure 14).

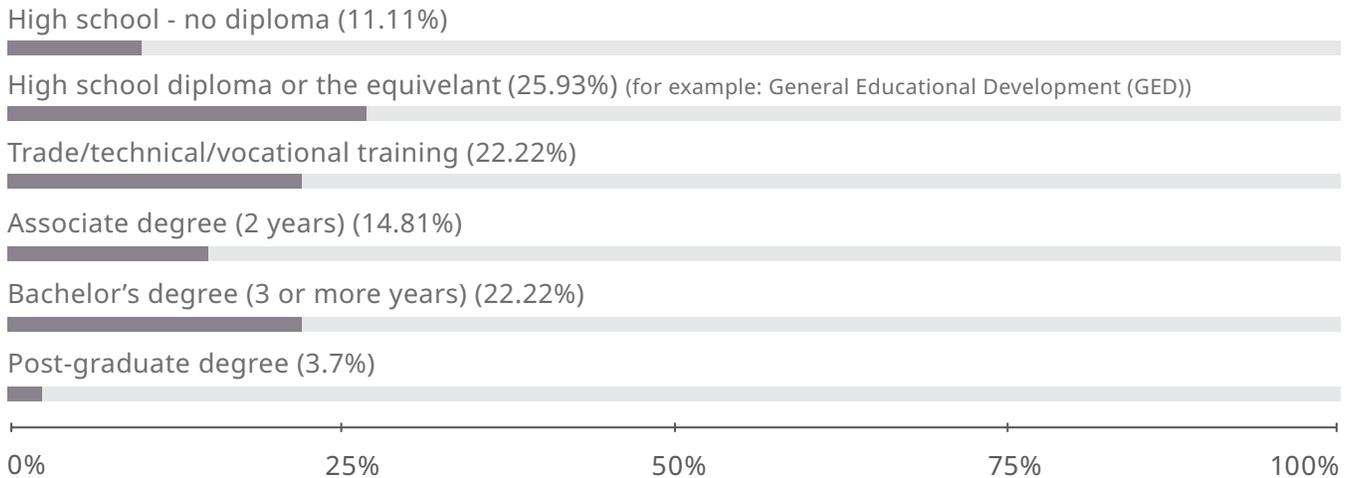


Figure 14: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (%) (Total = 27)

Just over half of respondents (57.7%) were in employment i.e., employed (12), self-employed (1) or both employed and self-employed (2) (of whom seven also reported that they were completing training/education). Almost one third (30.8%) were unemployed, of whom one was working on setting up a small business and another was in training/education. Three respondents (11.54%) reported that they were in training or education only and one respondent did not answer this question (figure 15).

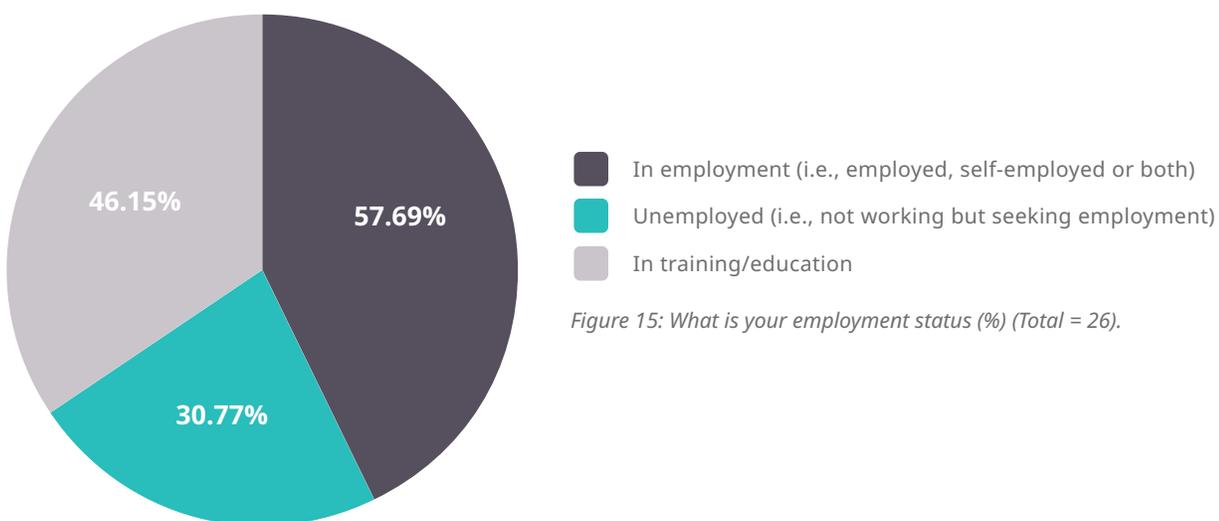


Figure 15: What is your employment status (%) (Total = 26).

Of those who were working, areas of employment were broad. The most common area of employment was the community and social services sector.. Annal incomes were as follows⁷:

- \$46,000-\$65,000 CAD per year (5)
- \$26,000-\$45,000 CAD per year (5)
- Less than \$25,000 CAD per year (4)

Of the twelve respondents who said they were in training/education, four were pursuing trade/technical/vocational training, three were pursuing an associate degree, three were pursuing a bachelor's degree and two were pursuing post-graduate degrees. The most common areas of study were the community and social services and health sectors. All four respondents who were in training or education only reported an annual income of less than \$25,000 CAD.

BBF Applications: Background Information

Figure 16 displays the years that survey respondents received a bursary. As can be seen, no respondents said they received the bursary in 2020, which reflects the fact that the 2020 BBF application round was launched late in the year, with bursaries being awarded in January, 2021. There was a relatively even spread across the remaining four years since the BBF Program began in 2019.

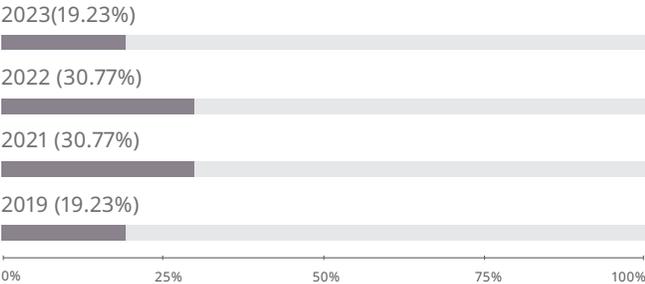


Figure 16: In what year did you receive the bursary? (%) (Total = 26)

The majority of survey respondents were accessing Transition House programs when they were supported to apply for the bursary (figure 17), followed by Second Stage Housing programs. Three respondents noted that they accessed more than one type of transition housing program during this process. Those who selected 'other' reported that they were supported to apply for the bursary by counselling and education programs. All

respondents stated that they heard about the BBF from a worker at the program they were accessing.

Program Type	No. of respondents
Safe Home	3
Transition House	13
Second Stage House	9
PEACE Program	2
Other	2
Unsure	1

Figure 17: What type of program did you access that supported you to apply for the bursary? (Total = 26)

More than half of survey respondents were supported to apply for the bursary by programs located in the Lower Mainland (52%) followed by Vancouver Island (28%). More than a third of programs were reported to be located in large cities with a population of 100,000 or more (36%), followed by small towns with a population between 5,000 and 29,000 (24%) and then medium cities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999 (20%). Five respondents (20%) were unsure of the population of the community of the program they accessed.

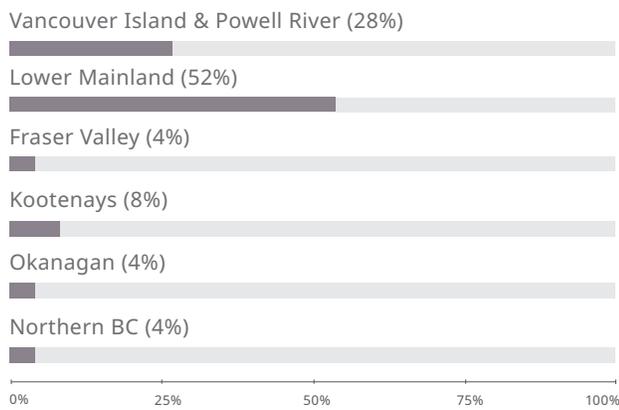


Figure 18: Which region of BC was the program located in? (%) (Total = 25)

More than two thirds of survey respondents received bursaries of the maximum amount of \$3,000 CAD (68%) (figure 19) and 80 per cent of respondents reported that they applied to use the funds for education/training related costs such as tuition fees, study aids etc. (figure 20). This was followed by childcare and transportations costs (both at 16%), job related costs such as purchasing tools and uniforms (8%) and one respondent reported applying for the funds to start a business (4%). Seven respondents (28%) noted 'other' reasons for use of funds which included food, rent for moving, life expenses, housing costs, paying off student loans and one had not yet used the funds at the time of completing the survey.

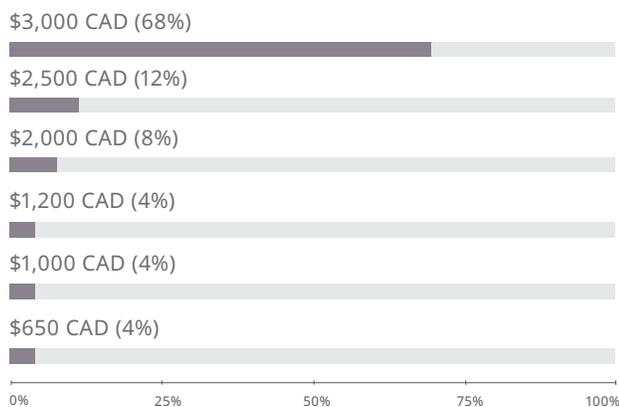


Figure 19 How much money did you receive? (%) (Total = 25)

What did you apply to use the funds for? (Check all that apply)	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Education/training related costs e.g., tuition fees, study aids etc.	20	80
Childcare	4	16
Transportation costs	4	16
Job related costs (e.g., tools, uniforms etc.)	2	8
To start a business	1	4
Other (please describe)	7	28

Figure 20: What did you apply to use the funds for? (Total = 25)

When asked about the areas of work and study that bursary recipients planned to use the funds for nine respondents (36%) cited opportunities within the community and social services sector (figure 21), of whom three stated that they chose this area of work because their lived experience led them to want to help others:

“Everything my family went through gave me a heart to help other families in my community.”
“I want to heal! And, I want to help others thrive!”

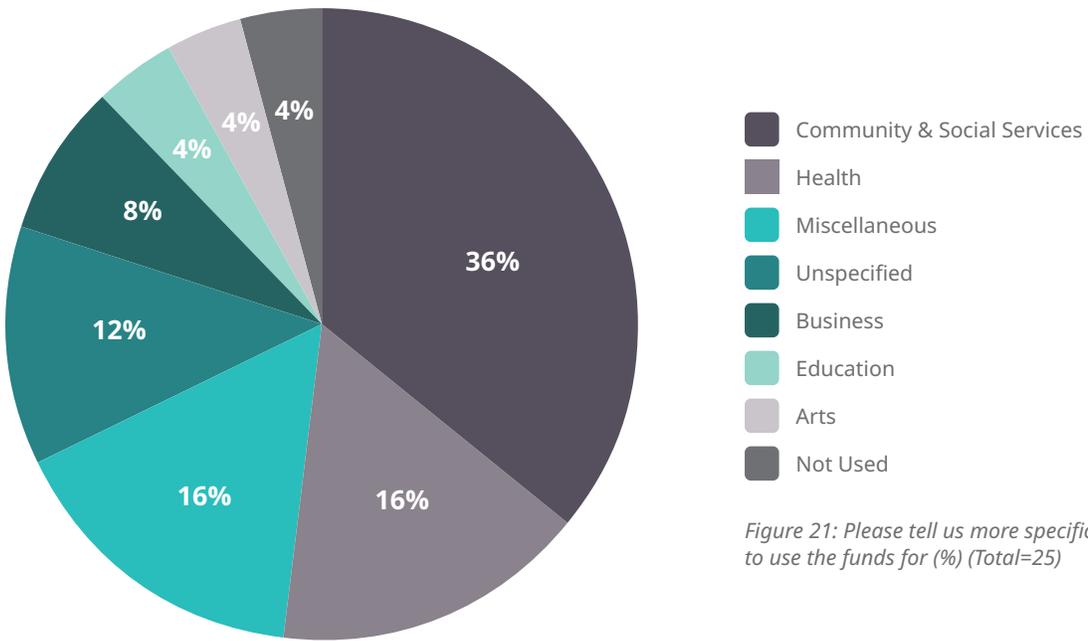


Figure 21: Please tell us more specifically what you applied to use the funds for (%) (Total=25)

Impacts of Receiving a Bursary

“I was able to improve and apply my time to my studies instead of worrying about how I was going to pay for things. It improved my mental health and safety.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 5

Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) said that they were able to utilise the bursary funds in the way they had intended to when they applied. Two respondents (8%) said they were somewhat able to, with one explaining that they used part of the money to get their certificates, but then unfortunately had to use the rest due to unforeseen circumstances; the other said they used the funds to buy supplies for their business but also had to use some funds to pay unexpected bills. One reported having not yet used the funds and the remaining four respondents (16%) said they were not able to use the funds as they had planned and cited the following reasons for this:

- Needing to use the money to pay rent.
- Needing to use the money to move house because their abuser found out where they were living.
- Using the funds for an alternate training program because they were unable to afford the total costs of the course they had initially applied to study.
- Needing to use the money to cover basic needs while looking for a place to live after their landlord asked them to leave due to needing the property back.

All survey respondents (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that the bursary helped to support their financial independence. Ninety-six percent strongly agreed or agreed that receiving the bursary helped to relieve their stress, and just slightly fewer (92%) strongly agreed or agreed that receiving the bursary was an empowering experience for them and that it helped improve their ability to support themselves (and their dependents if applicable). Eighty-eight per cent strongly agreed or agreed that receiving the bursary contributed to restoring their self-worth (figure 22).

“I would like to thank you to help me during my lowest phase of my life, which helped me to take a biggest step forward for my study.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 6

Just over three-quarters of respondents (76%) strongly agreed or agreed that receiving the bursary helped them to achieve their career goals; and about two-thirds strongly agreed or agreed that the bursary provided them with training and education opportunities or employment opportunities they would otherwise not have been able to pursue (68% and 64% respectively). Finally, more than half of respondents (56%) strongly agreed or agreed that the bursary helped to increase their safety (figure 22).

“It took me at least a year talking about wanting to start school in the area of social work. I couldn’t find the courage to take the steps. I was so afraid of how it could work financially as I needed to take care of my kids. Receiving this bursary gave me hope that it was possible. It was my first step. I am so thankful.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 13

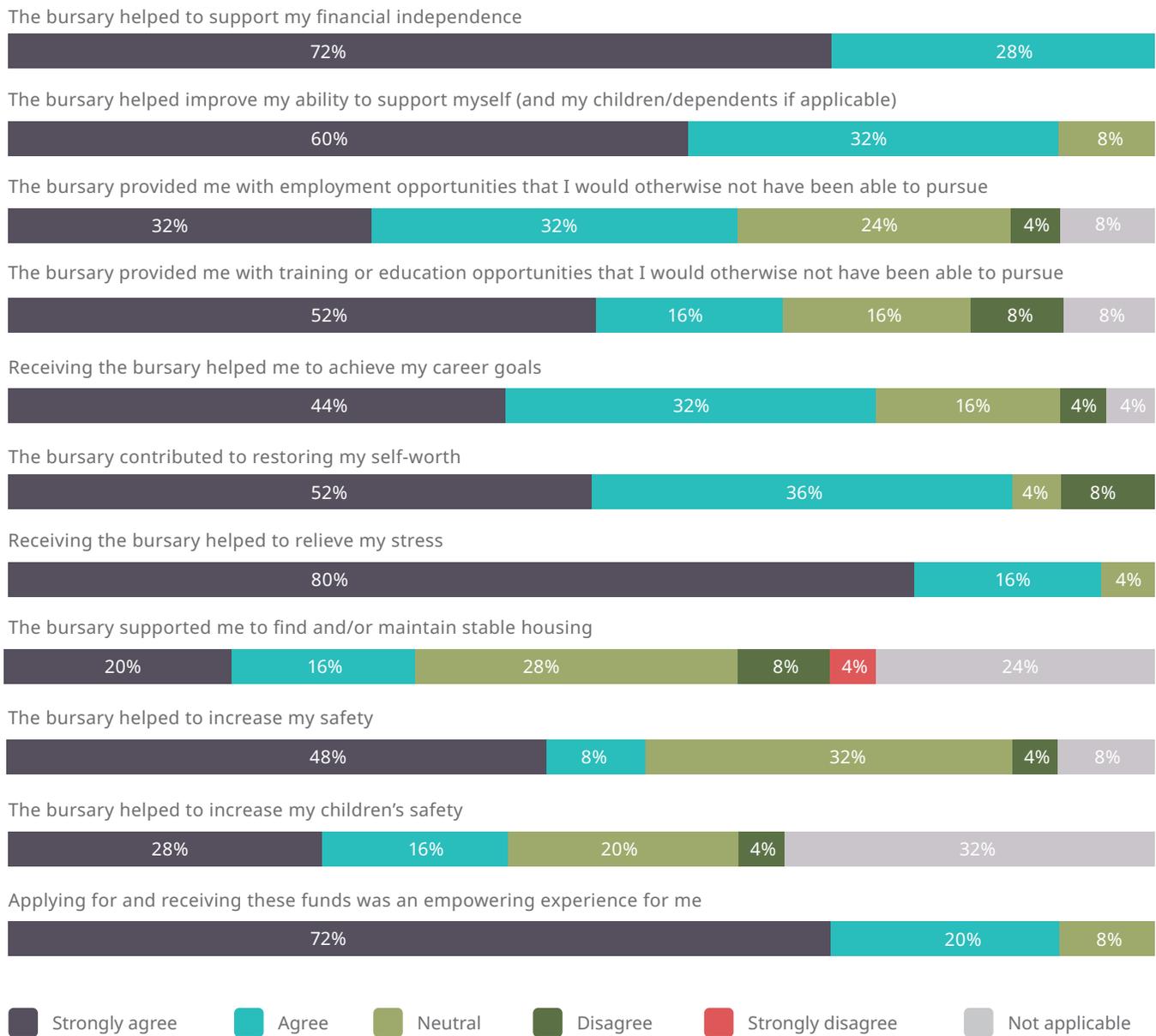


Figure 22: Impacts of receiving a bursary (%) (Total = 25)

“The bursary was a huge boost to my confidence and helped me feel supported by community.”
 - Bursary Recipient; Respondent 17

Almost 90% of respondents (88%) said that the bursary impacted or changed their life and that of their dependents if applicable. (Two said they were unsure and one said it had not because she was still in the process of completing her exams and had required a lot of additional funds to get that far, but remained hopeful).

“Thank you again, I am eternally grateful! I’m now working my first job and without the bursary to achieve my initial license this dream would not have been possible!”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 4

When asked for further comments about how the bursary had impacted or changed people’s lives, responses could be grouped into the following themes: Impacts on children, keeping going, confidence boost, achieving goals and reducing stress.

Seven survey respondents talked about the **impacts that receiving the bursary had on their children**, four of whom said that for their children, seeing their mom reach her goals gave them hope and made them happier and proud of their moms, or inspired them to pursue education or training themselves.

“I was able to show to my kids that if you believe in yourself, you can get things done and that it doesn’t matter how old you are, you are capable of learning. The other thing the[y] saw was their mom there who is single was capable of reaching a goal and going beyond the boundaries set by society’s norms.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 5

Others talked about longer term impacts of completing their education to help them become more financially stable and how this will support them to provide for their children.

“It helped me continue my studies which is very important for me and being able to provide better for my kids long-term.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 25

Five comments related to the theme of **keeping going**, referring to things such as being able to **“get by day to day”**, **“keep a roof over their head”**, and **“get into stable housing”**. One person talked about having run out of funds before having to pay to take her final exam, which the bursary paid for, and another was able to purchase supplies to restart her small business after her abuser stole them from her.

Four people said that receiving the bursary gave them a **confidence boost**, knowing that bursaries are possible and there are people who want to support them to succeed.

“This bursary helped me take the step forward again into the field I previously studied. I lost my confidence and the bursary helped me take the first steps back toward my goal. Over time I was able to build up my experience and confidence again ...Thank you, you have helped make my dream come true!”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 2

Achieving goals was echoed by three other respondents, either in the form of adding to training and skill sets or achieving career goals.

“It really impacted me to become financially stable and helped me achieve my career goals.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 7

Three respondents stated that the bursary reduced monetary stress, provided relief in the moment and one explained the impact of this on her studies and parenting:

“I could commute to school without worrying about costs for the first few months which alleviated my stress and made me a better student and Mom for my child.”

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 24

The vast majority of respondents (84%) said that they did not access other funds to support them to achieve the goals they wrote about in their BBF application, such as the Single Mothers Support Fund (Cause We Care Foundation), National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (YWCA, Canada), or other funding sources. Of those who did access other funding sources, these included:

- The Single Mothers Support Fund (Cause We Care Foundation).
- The Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award.
- Miscellaneous scholarships and bursaries.
- National student loan grant.

Satisfaction with the BBF Application & Implementation Process

"I just want to say thank you very much to all staff for being so kind and caring during the application process. Communication was clear and timely and I really felt a sense of care during the process. The bursary fund has helped me to gain some confidence and independence back. It provided me with hope during a very difficult and hopeless feeling time in my life. This really is a life changing and absolutely a wonderful thing."

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 9

Ninety-six per cent of respondents said that overall, they were very satisfied or satisfied with the BBF application process (figure 23).

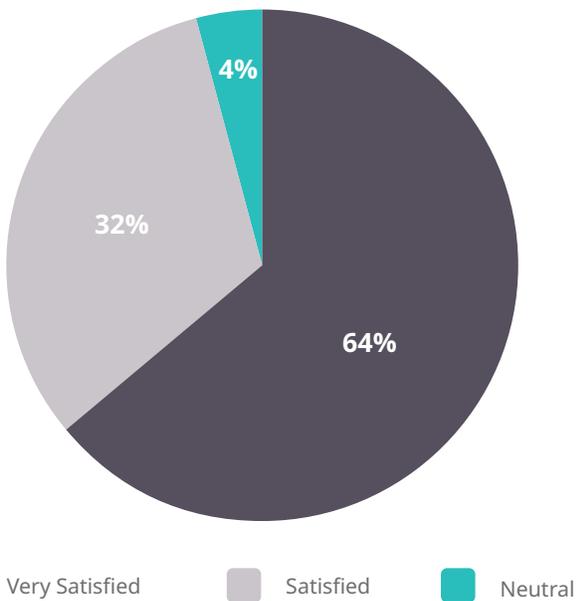


Figure 23: Overall, how satisfied were you with the BBF application process? (%) (Total = 25)

All respondents (100%) said they would rate the support they received from the BCSTH staff who supported them with their application as very helpful, and 92% said the same about the program staff who assisted them with their application (figure 24).

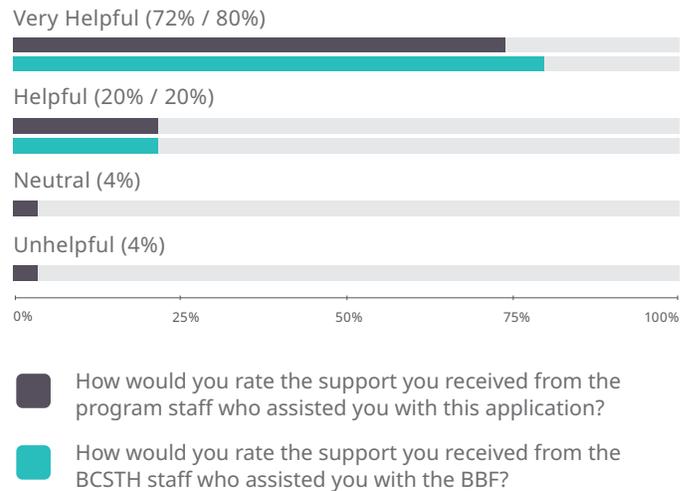


Figure 24: Satisfaction with support to complete the bursary application (%) (Total = 25)

All respondents (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that the funds were easy to access, and 88% strongly agreed or agreed that they were available when required (figure 25).

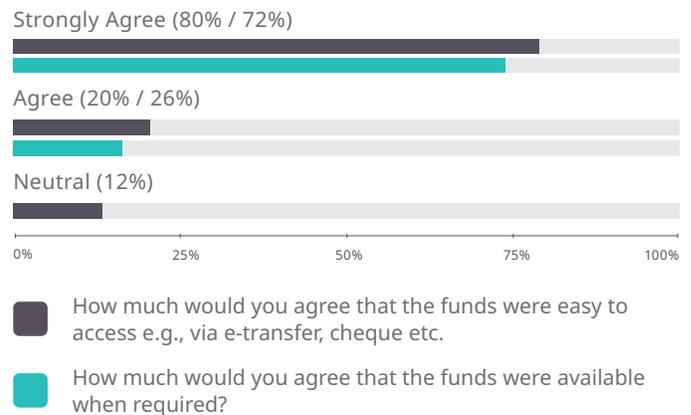


Figure 25: Satisfaction with accessing funds (%) (Total = 25)

All respondents (100%) said that a trauma- and violence-informed services are very important or important to them (figure 26) and 96% were very satisfied or satisfied with the trauma- and violence-informed approach of the BBF Program (figure 27).

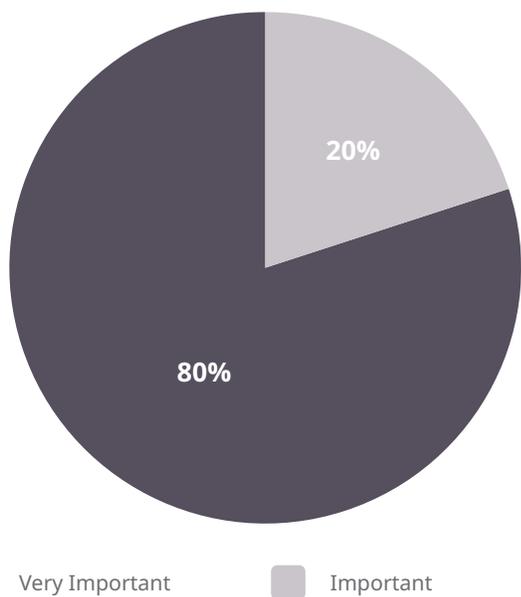


Figure 26: How important are trauma- and violence-informed services to you? (%) Total=25

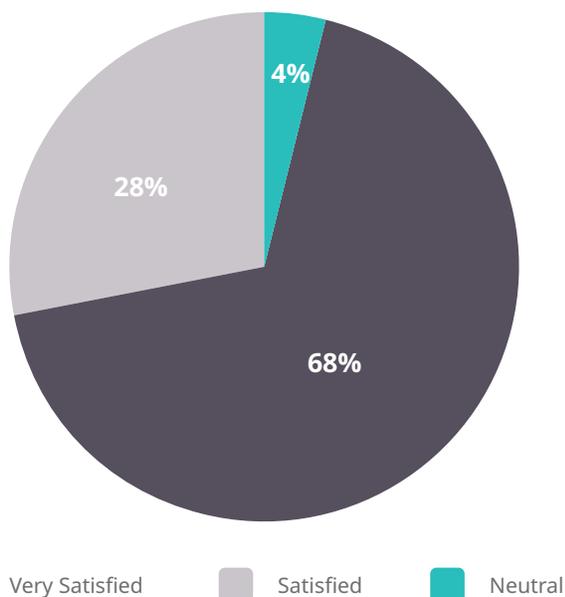


Figure 27: How satisfied were you with the trauma- and violence-informed approach of the BBF Program? (%) Total=25

When asked how respondents would change the BBF application process to better meet the needs of applicants in future, the majority of respondents said that they would not make any changes, with some stating that they found the process 'quick and easy', 'very straightforward', and acknowledged that the support they received from staff to complete the application helped a lot. A handful of respondents suggested the following improvements:

- Making the application form shorter and less repetitive.
- Advertising the program more to make it more accessible.
- Removing the need to be nominated by a staff member to remove any possibility of favouritism.
- Providing support after receiving the bursary to help recipients utilise the funds. This respondent explained that **"I felt a little lost when comes to where I can study something affordable"**.
- Paying funds directly to the institution, because they ended up having to use some for their legal expenses.

Survey respondents were asked if they experienced any challenges after receiving the bursary funds. Nineteen people responded to this question, of whom 10 said that they did not experience any challenges. Those who did described the following issues:

- Things taking longer than expected due to recovering from trauma and in one case due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Challenges relating to studying and also finding childcare or looking after their children, with one respondent explaining that this **"left me choosing to stay home to help with maintaining a healthy home."**
- Continued financial difficulties, in one case to fund the small business that they were able to set up with the bursary. One person suggested that it would be helpful if the bursary amount could be increased.

Survey respondents were also asked if they received any unexpected results after receiving the bursary. Twenty-one respondents answered this question of whom nine said they did not experience any unexpected results. Two people described negative results which included not being funded for the program they had applied to study, and feeling frustrated on having to make the decision that they could not continue with their studies. The remaining ten respondents described more positive results which included being surprised that the program existed and they actually got the funds, and being surprised by the confidence boost it provided or how, once the financial stress was taken away, they realised they could have the capacity to complete their course.

"I was in so much shock that I actually did receive the bursary, so I could pursue my passion."

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 1

Other respondents reported the following:

- Finding that more courses became available to them after taking certain lessons so they were able to complete more studies than they thought they would be able to.
- Being treated with more respect from their bank.
- Feeling very prepared for college after getting a laptop.
- Realising that the course they initially applied for turned out not to be for them, but that these lessons still provided them with the confidence they needed to progress to their dream job, which they were now working in.
- Having to use some funds for unexpected bills which **"was not planned, but still very helpful."**

"My renewed self-confidence was really unexpected!"

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 17

Finally, survey respondents were asked if they wanted to share any other comments before submitting their survey responses, to which many expressed much gratitude for the program.

"I was starting to think I couldn't do this and the check came at time to give me a boost in empowerment. It was like it was saying "We believe in you, here's proof." Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 5

"I would like to thank you for granting me the bursary. It changed my life differently and made me forget the bad experiences that I had from my abuser. I hope that you will continue to help more women like me and build their lives again to be a stronger person."

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 7

"I really can't even begin to describe how thankful and appreciative I am. Lots of single moms in my situation need some hope and need the pressure taken off and programs like this really help with that."

- Bursary Recipient; Respondent 13

Interview Feedback from Bursary Recipients

Nineteen women who responded to the survey agreed to take part in a follow up interview and five said they would like more information before deciding. Of these 24 women, 14 completed an interview. Interviews were conducted over Zoom either as a video call or a phone call. Interview questions are available in [appendix G](#).

Background Information

Bursary recipients from all years that bursaries have been awarded participated in an interview (figure 28)⁸.

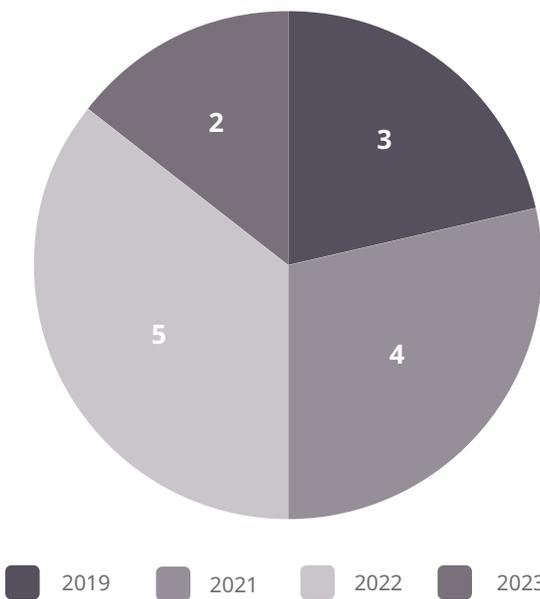


Figure 28: Year interviewees received a bursary (Total = 14)

Interviewees had used their bursaries for a range of purposes including tuition fees for diplomas and certificates, school supplies including laptops, transportation, test/exam fees, clothing, online courses, upgrading and one was yet to use their bursary. Interviewees were working and studying across a variety of sectors and fields, most commonly the community and social services and health sectors (figure 29).

⁸ The 2020 bursary application process took place late in the year therefore successful applicants received the bursary in 2021

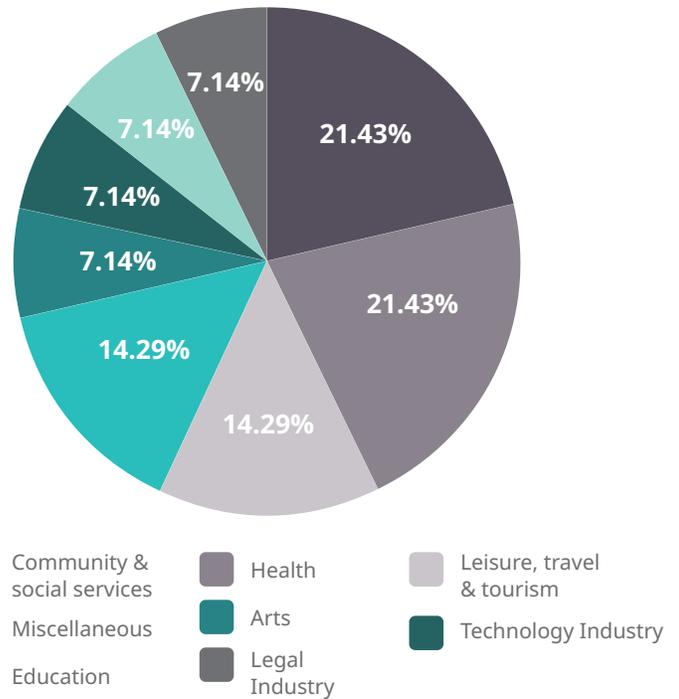


Figure 29: Interviewees' areas of work and study (Total = 14)

This project was interested in learning about ways in which the BBF Program may help strengthen the Community and Social Services Sector. In addition to enhancing morale and job satisfaction for anti-violence workers, we wondered if it may provide a route for people with lived experience to join the sector. There is support for this since almost one third (29%) of recipients to date have applied for a bursary to support education and employment opportunities in this field. The interviews provided an opportunity to explore this further. Three interviewees were pursuing careers in this sector and talked about wanting to give back after their own experiences or having been supported through their own journeys. One had also volunteered for the agency who supported her and planned to do so again.

"I had so many people help and, and almost literally hold me up as I was going through all of this, so I wanna be someone that can help somebody else, like I want to give back so desperately."

Bursary recipients in other fields may also be supporting the Community and Social Services sector, as was noted by one interviewee pursuing health care:

"I want to like volunteer myself to help other women too...it's like my way of giving back because, because of the bursary I am here and I am doing good in life. Compared to...two, three years back, I'm so blessed right now."

Feedback on the Application Process

Support From Anti-Violence Workers is Integral to This Process

When asked about the application process, a clear theme that emerged was that the support that women received from anti-violence workers was integral to this process. Many expressed **gratitude and appreciation to the workers for their encouragement and support**, stating that this made the process easy, and describing being nominated and having workers be pleased for them when they got the bursary as 'awesome' and 'very cool'. A few doubted whether they would have got the bursary without this support, either due to feeling overwhelmed by the application form or feeling despondent about their chances of being successful.

"I left and I was lucky when I, you know, met [Program Name] the manager, the program manager, she was like wonderful. She was, she was like giving me a push like "You have to do this. You can do this" ... I just like literally just told her 'I want to study, I just want to continue my studies' ... but obviously at that time, after so much doubt, I have, I lost my job, right? I was in the Second Stage, I didn't know how, how to do it...So, she told me about that bursary fund...she gave me all paperwork and asked me to fill it out...with the help of her, it was so easy for me."

A subtheme that arose here was that there was an element of surprise and disbelief throughout the process, for example on learning that the program existed, that a worker had chosen to nominate them, and when they found out they had been successful.

"I was kind of like in disbelief. I've never had like anything, and I like, honestly, I didn't, it's not that I didn't wanna send it, it was more of like 'it's not gonna, it's not gonna happen, so don't even bother'... I think just because I had the, somebody know about it, and somebody think of me, and then somebody offer it, somebody printed it off, like it was kind of like handed to me in a way. I didn't have to go and find it and figure everything out."

The nomination process is potentially limiting

All of the women we interviewed said they heard about the program through an anti-violence worker at the program they participated in because they were thought to be a good fit for the bursary. Who is deemed eligible or who gets to apply for a bursary is therefore dependent on the judgement and perspectives of anti-violence workers, leaving a question of who is being missed or not being chosen to apply. Another theme that arose was that **the program may benefit from more advertising** so that any women who would like to pursue employment or education opportunities could inquire about it and apply, as some said it felt a bit hidden and one had concerns there could be potential for discrimination within the nomination process. This theme is returned to later on under [‘Suggestions for Improvement’](#).

“I mean I guess you guys work with different programs and it’s up to the people in the program to let the, the people using the program know about it, right? So, I guess, I guess like in a way it felt a bit like luck... but I don’t know like how you could change that. I mean, I think it makes sense that you would just let people know who work in the program and they would tell people about it. I don’t know how widely they told people there, you know, I have no idea.”

The application form felt overwhelming for some

While some people said that they found the application process straightforward, or for some it was hard to remember, some found it **too lengthy**, felt the **questions were repetitive** or found it **a lot to complete while also researching courses**. However, one person noted that a positive aspect of this was that it forced her to focus on future possibilities:

“That was, yeah, that was hard because...I was in a different state at that point. It was just like a lot to write, create, yeah, like look up education and stuff, but it was... kind of like making me think about the future and giving me like a possibility. That was good.”

A few talked about how their **mental state at the time of applying made the process harder**. For example, women were in trauma, experiencing depression and anxiety, facing court battles and financial struggles and dealing with ongoing abuse.

“It was not hard for me...just the questions are a bit, for me it’s too much, it’s a lot of questions for people, for people like me who’s already undergoing hard um, anxiety and depression. So, but I was willing to do it. So, yeah, just the questions are lengthy, I guess.”

One recipient said she found it difficult because English is not her first language. A couple of women said they found it hard to talk about the abuse they experienced. This is not a requirement of the application form from BCSTH, but it’s possible that women may have deemed this important to include. For example, some women said they **found it hard to know what would help them stand out** in their application.

“I had no clue what to put down on that form. And if I did put something down, would it have made me stand out more? Would it have got my point out? And while doing that application with the worker I found that most of the questions were repeated.”

Receiving the funds was very straightforward

All participants said receiving the funds was straightforward, describing it as 'smooth and clear' and 'quick and easy'. A couple even said they were surprised to receive slightly more money than they had expected. This is because, if BCSTH has had capacity, funds have been rounded up e.g., if someone requested \$850 this has been topped up to \$1,000.

"It went really smoothly...it was very clear that like, what the time expectations were, which I appreciated and it was very clear about like, yeah, just some of the technical stuff like, you know, have bank codes and things like that."

One person expressed appreciation for the instructions they received about the bursary being counted as taxable income, however another said they were caught off guard by this. This likely reflects differences in the years the bursary was received. As mentioned earlier in this report, information regarding taxes was included following similar feedback on this topic from recipients in the first year of the bursary.

Some women specifically stated that they appreciated the **flexibility of the funds**.

"The fact that like, we were given freedom to use the money as we needed was really great because I think if there was like some kind of pressure that you can only use it for tuition or something you know, because like people have to do what they have to do, you know? Yes, definitely I did use it for tuition partly and that was the goal, but also like, you know, as like single moms, it's like there's always, there's there's just needs and you just have to fulfill them and so yeah, I appreciated that, that there wasn't any kind of like accounting of it or like you know any, any kind of like pressure to do whatever, that was, that was helpful."

However, another wondered if it may be beneficial to offer recipients the choice as to whether they want to receive the funds themselves or have them go directly to e.g., the educational institution.

"It was all like really quick and easy, but then again with the whole like, if, you know, how they end up just transferring me the money which is just like you know in some ways a little bit too easy because it's like 'oh wow I can like go and you know ... I can spend it' like, you know cause there's always another bill that comes up..."

Impacts of Receiving a Bursary for Women & their Children

The bursary gave women a kick start or helped them to keep going

Almost everyone talked about the impact of the bursary on helping them to either take the first step in their employment or education journey or keep going with their existing journey. It was described as a 'door opener', a 'significant start', and to have given a 'kick start' to "what am I going to do with my life?" The first step was acknowledged by some as is the biggest and hardest step.

"You guys gave me in that beginning, that little course was my first time I had become a Care Aid...I had kids...just get through it, just get through it. So, I became a carer...it was just the first little nudge that I needed. And it set of this journey."

Some women talked about the timing of the bursary - it arrived for many at a low point in their lives when they were just about to give up and provided a morale boost to keep going to achieve their goals. Some said that knowing there were people who believed in them discouraged them from quitting, felt confirming and validating and gave them hope.

"I was like, halfway through my [college] education and I ended up in a shelter. And that money came at a time where I was actually gonna give up, I was just gonna say 'screw it' and quit. And then one of the workers there said 'you know what, we have bursaries to help out with cost'... I ended up getting that \$3,000. I thought, 'you know what, you guys believe in me, so I can't quit'. That was a good boost for morale."

"[The bursary] really helped me to finish like what I had started. Like there were so many setbacks that I had experienced throughout all of the training...having that bursary come right at the end when I had my final...test booked...if I didn't have that I, like my credit cards were already maxed, like I wouldn't have been able to actually do the test. So, it really made a big difference."

It was acknowledged by many women that this was a context in which they were starting from scratch. For example, some had had to leave their jobs, had debt built up in their names, or their abusers had 'taken everything' including houses, belongings, vehicles, money, even pensions. Some were paying ongoing legal fees, forced to sell their businesses, or had lost childcare, parenting rights, or had their reputations sabotaged by their abusers. Many were single moms, some of whom were separated from family. Any supports were therefore acknowledged to be much needed and appreciated.

"Truly, I didn't really know what I was going to do afterwards and stuff, cause everything was taken away from me...I had to give my [job] up... To get through that was pretty intense. So, yeah that, the course that I took through you guys was, very much needed and again, like it opened up doors..."

"Everyone so far that I've met has been in a legal situation that's drained everything, if there was anything there to start with and yeah... just having to start over, right? And being a single person with your children in BC, which well, is [a] very expensive place...a lot of us are separated from our families in some way...so it's that, you know, it's just any support that is there for women in that situation it's, it's so needed and so appreciated."

Importantly, women emphasised how valuable the wider support they received from the program they were accessing throughout this time was, with some describing it as life saving and saying things like "I really do owe everything to them". The bursary alone may not have enabled women to completely start over, but it was identified as a significant help.

Another subtheme that arose here was that the bursary **instilled hope about the future** by knowing someone believed in them and wanted to help them; by increasing the possibility of achieving their education/employment goals; providing them with a sense of security financially; and by allowing them to start to see beyond their world of abuse.

Hope

"It gave me like hope, that gave me like 'somebody wants to help me out with my education', which I've never had...it was like somebody was giving me money to wanna help me be educated and have a better future. So, I think like that was probably the biggest impact. Not really the, the money, it's like the 'oh I, like somebody wants me to, you know, do well', so."

"...it's about hope. It's about finding a purpose in life. Getting a step ahead. Because when you're being abused it's all you can see, it's all that there is. It's not even a thought to be outside that world because it's not possible. It's like this is my world. Of abuse. That's my whole world. And then there was this little piece that, oh yeah, and that's, getting that little piece was just everything."

"...It gave me a hope like because I don't know if I'm going to school or not. At the time I really wanted to study but I don't know where to start. And I have no means to go for school. I was working, working so hard and...also helping my family back home. So, when I got it, I was like, oh, it's, It's doable. I can study."

Receiving the bursary improved women's mental health and well-being

Almost all of the women we spoke to said that receiving the bursary enhanced their self-esteem and gave them a confidence boost and this was a theme that was returned to several times by many interviewees. One woman said that having people believe in her and who knew her story helped to combat feelings of imposter syndrome at university. This was echoed by others who stated that the realization that they were worthy of a bursary was empowering, increased their self-worth, and boosted morale.

"I should probably add that I'm not like a studious person ... I've never been eligible or even really applied, or been suggested to apply for any bursary or any scholarship of any kind ... So, to be able to have this you know, like opportunity, you know, where it's just like 'Wow, like me a bursary? Me a scholarship?' ... it's just that feeling of like, 'wow, like I'm worthy of this bursary,' you know, like so it just really helps people on an emotional level too."

Successfully applying for a bursary, achieving employment and education goals, and also overcoming incredibly difficult circumstances helped some women to feel strong. One woman explained that the opportunity to learn and use her voice again helped to quieten some of the abusive messages she had heard for so long. Another said:

"It gives me so much confidence that I can get through whatever, whatever obstacles, struggles I have in life..."

Some women said that the opportunities they pursued with the bursary, or further education they then went on to pursue, allowed them to build up their skills and knowledge which in turn increased their confidence at work, or led to them successfully gaining new employment.

"[Practicum coworkers] were so encouraging. They were always like 'you're doing such a good job, we love having you here, you are such a great asset to our team'. So, I graduated. I've had 5 job offers."

Closely related to this, a few women talked about how the bursary helped them to gain independence. This included through having sufficient funds to qualify for a credit card, increasing their social networks and achieving additional goals like getting their driver's license. One woman left her abuser shortly after completing the course she used the bursary for.

"When I started my tuition, like my teacher, I have like other person to spend some time with me, I have some colleagues right, in that class. I got to know other people...if I talk to myself like 3 years back, from that time, I'm totally independent now... I took my driving license... I got support from my family so that I can work full-time...And after that, I got my citizenship."

Several women said that receiving the funds **lifted financial stress and strain**, which in turn led to things like improved relationships with their kids and achieving higher grades as a result of being able to focus better.

"It came right at the right time where my tuition was due too for the classes that I was taking. And for that, for that year's semesters, I basically got all As...because we didn't have to worry about where money was coming from to pay for these classes. It took...that emotional upheaval of my shoulders."

Another said the opportunity to study helped to distract her from thinking about the abuse she went through and in time her sleep improved and she came off of her depression and anxiety medication.

Women reported improved relationships with their children and being able to provide for them better

Women with children talked about some ways in which they were able to provide more for their children after receiving the bursary. For some women this was as a result of feeling more supported financially either when they initially received the bursary or in the longer term. For example, one woman who had recently got a job with a stable income, decent schedule and travel opportunities explained that:

"For that reason, it most certainly impacted them [kids] positively, especially because the bursary covered my first license. Without that I wouldn't have been able to continue on to like the additional licenses that led me to this job."

Others talked about being better able to provide for their kids as a result of the bursary **helping them to stay on track and not give up**. They explained that looking after themselves allowed them to be more present for their children.

"If I like lost my mental health then who's gonna look after my child? No one. So obviously I cook for myself and do all those things for myself because of my child. Because I can see if I don't think about myself or if I don't concentrate on my mental health and all those things then nobody gonna look after my child. So directly I did all those things for them so that, I can give them a better life."

Feeling more confident and having fewer financial pressures was reported to have **improved the general environment at home**, which positively impacted women's children.

"When we are fine, they are fine. So, I think I was really excited back then, so, yeah, I think that impacts them too. So, I think it's giving a little hope and, I don't know like, feeling of like 'Let's keep going. Let's keep going.' I don't know, like 'this is not the end' and yeah, I think it was good for, for all of us."

A couple of women said they received encouragement and support from their children while they were completing their education. One said her older children were inspired to return to school themselves and another explained that when her children saw her studying this helped to repair their relationship following the abuse.

"And the nice thing was, is that, you know, the kids saw that. It's like, 'good for you, Mom, I know you've really struggled through this'... 'good for you for doing this'...The lies that they've been told about me, they're just like 'You know what? Maybe not'..."

A few women also talked about sharing their learning with their children, e.g., one is helping her daughter with self-empowerment after using the bursary for therapeutic courses that helped to rebuild her own self-confidence, and others who studied language courses talked about sharing what they learned with their children.

It is also important to note that about half of them women we talked to also acknowledged wider supports, beyond the bursary and the Women's Transition Housing and Supports programs that helped them to continue with their education and employment goals. For example, some talked about family members who could provide childcare, some accessed additional scholarships, grants or bursaries, or other forms of income support such as living in income supported accommodation, receiving child support, or having family members who could support with income. Mental health support was also mentioned, i.e., therapy to support their general health while dealing with ongoing pressures and impacts of trauma.

Challenges & Barriers Encountered

Challenges relating to additional costs beyond what the bursary could cover, recovering from their experiences of abuse, starting from scratch and, for many, being a single mom with little additional supports resulted in long and drawn-out processes to achieving educational and employment goals for many interviewees.

Additional costs required to complete education/employment goals

Many women spoke of additional costs, beyond what the bursary could cover, to complete their education and employment goals, such as remaining tuition fees, credential evaluations, exam fees, upgrading or refresher lessons, internet, drivers license fees and vehicle costs, as well as day to living expenses and childcare.

“When I reflect on like, yeah, the supports that had brought me through school as so far, it’s like, right, you know, that ... helped me to get to where I am now, which is, you know, without having any debts to the school ... despite like it’s still difficult for me to come up with all the tuition, but you know ... now I’m only, you know, trying to figure out how to pay for, you know, X number of credits that are left or whatever.”

Some women worked over time, worked multiple jobs or took out a loan to meet these needs.

“I’m still paying it off but, and I’m doing the best I can. It’s a couple 100 here, a couple 100 there... and yes, I do have three jobs but rent is also very expensive here, food’s very expensive, gas...”

One said she felt tempted to give up but also determined to finish. Another was unable to complete her diploma and one could not cover the cost of her preferred course so opted for something she was less interested in. Closely related to this was the issue of **unanticipated expenses** that came up for some women. These included emergency car repairs,

court fees and installing better internet when schooling moved online during the pandemic. While the flexibility of the funds was beneficial to allow women to meet these needs, one woman who used some funds for an emergency car repair so she could continue commuting to work and taking her children to school, explained lingering feelings of disappointment about this:

“I still think about...why I didn’t use it for the purpose and I feel kind of bad to myself like ‘Why didn’t happen?’ Well, I need to use it for other thing, but still, I think until now I feel ...kind of like sad because I couldn’t use it for to study something else. I don’t know. Yeah, I think it’s kind of like frustration.”

Ongoing impacts of abuse

Many women talked about challenges they faced as a result of the abuse they had experienced, which often slowed down and delayed their progress with their education and employment goals. This included **physical impacts** of abuse such as memory loss as well as ongoing impacts of **trauma and PTSD symptoms** e.g., feeling scared and nervous all the time, having panic attacks and taking ‘baby steps’ to rebuild their confidence at work. Issues of **ongoing child support and custody battles** taking up time and money, and being **unable to return to their previous employment** for safety reasons also played into this.

“I just started feeling like, like life would, just wasn’t manageable...I didn’t actually care anymore about the [course] and then I was considering quitting for a few years. Anyway...I was trying to get back on my feet, but I just found I couldn’t really do anything.”

Pressures of being a single mom

Interviewees with children talked about the pressures of being a single mom, referring to a **lack of time to study**, competing financial priorities and **additional expenses** requiring them to work multiple jobs to meet these needs. The **need for flexible courses**, such as part-time courses, courses that fit with school schedules, or summer courses were emphasised and could be a limiting factor when deciding what course to take.

“Okay, you got the money to study something, but now you need to spend money to pay someone to look after your children. So, for me that was a big challenge, to be honest.”

Suggestions for Improvements

In addition to the suggestions regarding **simplifying the application form**, proposed improvements for the BBF Program related to broadening the program reach and providing more follow up support.

Broadening the program reach

As briefly mentioned above, suggestions under this theme related to removing the nomination process and **advertising the program more widely** through posters, pamphlets, bulletin boards and a dedicated website to build awareness and encourage any interested women to inquire and ask for support to apply.

“Maybe more advertising of the program itself, like so then there’s more people...aware of that kind of program. I only found out about it through [Agency], but I mean, even making like, you know, more bursaries, more scholarships ... advertising more and having more women be aware of that possibility because it would really you know, give women the, the chance to take that, that further step towards their goals, right?”

They also related to **growing the bursary** so that there are more available, with one woman suggesting developing community partnerships to reach women experiencing violence who may not make it into a transition house program.

“Get the community to support you so you can have more funding...cause there’s some people that, that leave with nothing and they just come with the clothes on their back. And to start from scratch takes a lot of money...it’s a struggle. And those are the ones that make it to the transition house. There’s so many out there that don’t make it to the transition house that are in living in their car. And that’s why it’d be nice to put it like, kind of expand that to reach the women living in their car.”

Providing more follow up support

There were a variety of ways in which it was felt that additional support after receiving the bursary could be beneficial. As discussed earlier in this section, many women struggled to meet the additional costs of completing their education. It is thus not surprising that many of these comments related to **increasing the bursary amount** or creating **opportunities to apply for another bursary**. Several comments related to **sharing information about other bursary and scholarship programs**, perhaps via a mailing list for bursary recipients, with some emphasising that support to apply for these would also be important.

"If there could be some sort of support to say 'okay, if you're a woman wanting to go into education that's going to be more than this and this is just kind of the stepping stone' then, then support to source and apply for other grants and supports that are available that they have no idea about and just even don't feel worthy of and how do we have the capacity to like work and feed the kids and pay the rent as well as like looking into that? Like, the brick wall that's already there in terms of feeling worthy of it is enough to put the brakes on that..."

Some women felt they would have benefited from **more support and guidance when picking a course to study**, both in terms of picking a subject as well as to explore their options so that they could maximise the reach of the bursary.

"It was hard for me to decide what to study. So, it was kind of like, 'okay, now I have money, what I can use it for?'...I was feeling more like if someone was kind of like guiding the process with me, would be more helpful."

One woman felt **more fanfare to celebrate the success of bursary recipients** would be nice, as the nature of the bursary program made her reluctant tell many people about it. She suggested follow up information about how many others had received a bursary and what for as well as perhaps a small token of congratulations would prevent it from 'staying in the shadows'. Another wondered if BCSTH or the transition house program might be able to partner with a daycare or find practicum students to **help with childcare** to make it easier for women with children to study.

Discussion, Recommendations & Conclusions

Despite a strong evidence base supporting numerous positive impacts of flexible financial assistance for GBV survivors and the need for such assistance having been identified by multiple sources in Canada, existing initiatives remain piecemeal, are not well known about and support can be small or may be tied to social assistance eligibility.

This project evaluated the impacts of the BBF, a flexible financial assistance program for women with experiences of violence in BC, that provides bursaries to pursue education and employment opportunities to help women become financially independent so they can lead safe, meaningful and productive lives. We also explored impacts of the program on the Community and Social Services sector more broadly, i.e., impacts on job satisfaction for anti-violence workers, and the likelihood of women pursuing opportunities within the sector, to which they would bring invaluable lived experience.

Impacts of flexible financial assistance programs on the community and social services sector

It was evident from feedback from anti-violence workers who participated in this evaluation that the BBF Program enhanced their overall job satisfaction, with 100 per cent of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Workers explained that the BBF Program gave them hope, boosted their morale and made them feel more motivated and confident in their work. Supporting a woman to successfully apply for a bursary was described as an empowering experience that was both rewarding and satisfying and provided them with a sense of accomplishment. Several workers explained that being able to provide women with something practical and tangible that has the potential to make a real difference in their lives felt good and can be uncommon in their line of work. The flexibility of the funds was described as a key factor in this as it gave women agency and choice over how they used the funds and was described as 'money with dignity'. These findings align with those of WSCADV's evaluation of the DVHF model, where flexible funding to support survivors was reported to prevent staff burnout (Mbilinyi, 2015).

There is also evidence that programs like the BBF may help to strengthen the sector by creating a pathway to joining the sector for those with

lived experience. Almost one third of bursary recipients to date (29%) applied for a bursary to pursue education and employment opportunities in the Community and Social Services sector, several of whom specifically stated that their personal experiences had led them to want to pursue this line of work. Furthermore, some bursary recipients in other fields of work talked about wanting to volunteer within the sector as a way of giving back.

It is significant that 56 per cent of women who responded to our online survey said the bursary increased their safety, and focus groups with anti-violence workers revealed that several of the women they supported were able to utilise the funds to rent, or continue renting, their own place and not return to their abuser. Women also talked about how the bursary kickstarted their careers, gave them confidence and helped them to gain independence away from their abuser. Fewer women returning to their abusers reduces the likelihood of them returning to shelters and thus increases the capacity of shelters to support other women in need. This is another way in which flexible financial assistance programs can strengthen the sector, and again, the flexibility of the funds is paramount to this.

Impacts of flexible financial assistance for GBV survivors

In line with the findings of the current evaluation, many of the flexible financial assistance evaluations reviewed at the beginning of this report described positive impacts of the funds on survivors' independence and housing stability (Mbilinyi, 2015; Strategic Prevention Solutions, 2011; Sullivan, Bomsta & HacsKaylo, 2016; López-Zerón, Clements & Sullivan, 2019; Marcus, 2022), though it is important to bear in mind that most of these programs combined financial assistance with housing advocacy, and had the specific goal of supporting survivors to secure safe and stable long-term housing. While the BBF Program is slightly different in its mandate, women are typically receiving, or have recently received, a range of supports from anti-violence programs that may include housing advocacy and several women expressed that the wider support they received from anti-violence programs was crucial in helping them to get back on their feet.

It is also important to bear in mind that BBF bursaries are relatively small, ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 CAD and many women talked about ongoing financial difficulties they were facing as they continued on their education and employment journeys. This was exacerbated for many by the fact that they were single moms, or by ongoing impacts of the abuse they had experienced interfering with and delaying their progress to reach their goals. Many women inquired about possibilities to access further bursaries and scholarships or suggested that signposting to other, similar initiatives or offering additional bursaries could improve the BBF Program. That said, women were able to achieve a substantial amount with the funds that they received, with 100% of women who responded to the online survey agreeing or strongly agreeing that it helped to support their financial independence, and 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it impacted or changed their life. This chimes with prior evaluations of flexible funding models, where small amounts of money reportedly often made the biggest differences (Riviera, 2019; Bluemoon, 2020; Mbilinyi, 2015), because the flexibility of the funds affords women the ability to,

for example, pay their rent and also purchase the basic necessities required to support them in their education and employment goals.

In addition to increasing safety and promoting independence, there were several other parallels between the current evaluation findings and those of previous research. For example, improved mental health and well-being, both as a result of alleviating financial stress and through enhanced self-esteem, confidence and renewed hope was a common finding across several studies (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013; Sullivan, Bomsta & HacsKaylo, 2016; Chen & Sullivan, 2022; Marcus, 2022; Ayeni & Hampton, 2023).

Many women we spoke to explained that this in turn positively impacted their relationships with their children by improving the general environment at home, enabling them to provide more for their children, and in some cases spend more time together. This is similar to earlier findings, where funds for children's activities reportedly supported mothers to stabilize their children (Mbilinyi & Kreiter, 2013) and a stable living environment improved children's safety, well-being and happiness (Mbilinyi, 2015; Bomsta & Sullivan, 2018), supporting their recovery from IPV.

Finally, almost all of the women we consulted with talked about the fact that when they received the bursary they were in a position where they had lost everything, were at their lowest and in many cases were starting from scratch to rebuild their lives from the ground up. Receiving the bursary was a signal to them that someone believed in them and wanted them to succeed, which again, motivated them to keep going and not give up. Similar feedback is reported by The New Leaf Project, a cash transfer program for people experiencing recent homelessness in Vancouver, BC, as they explain:

“Cash transfers provide choice, control and purchasing power at a critical time in people’s lives. This is not merely a gesture of help, it is a signal that society believes in them.”

- Foundations for Social Change, 2023

Recommendations to improve the BBF Program

In addition to learning about the impacts of the bursary funds for women with experiences of violence, this evaluation sought feedback regarding ways to improve the BBF Program. Overall, feedback from both workers and women was positive across all aspects of the program. Key areas where recommendations for improvements were provided related to streamlining the application process, advertising the program more and providing some follow up support.

1 Streamline the application process

This feedback mostly revolved around making improvements to the application form i.e., by reducing the number of questions and paying attention to removing any questions that are repetitive. Simplifying the process through using a simple online form was also proposed. While BCSTH does offer a Survey Monkey form, programs and recipients can choose from a range of options how to complete the application i.e., by email, fax or online. It's possible that this information is not reaching all applicants. Clearer communication with all information in one place, such as the BBF website might help to address this issue. BCSTH could also explore the possibility of embedding an online application form on the website.

Some workers explained that uploading various documents such as itemized costs in the correct format can be time consuming. Clarity around the required formatting for different types of application may be helpful. Gathering all of these resources whilst also researching courses and programs was also described as a time consuming and complex task by some, though also worthwhile and manageable given the infrequency of the applications to date. If the BBF Program were to receive more funding and become a regular offering, BCSTH may wish to consider ways to keep the overall workload

manageable e.g., by opening application rounds during quieter times in the year, publicizing an application schedule in advance, and announcing deadlines early.

It was apparent that the perceived competition made it hard for some women to know what information to include in their application to help them stand out and improve their chances of being successful, with a couple of women stating that they found it hard to recount the story of their abuse. As explained earlier in this report, the application process uses a trauma-informed approach and this is not a requirement of the application form or the interview. BCSTH could state this on the application form to ensure that women don't feel pressured to share this information.

2 Increase funding and advertise the program more

Both workers and women suggested the program could benefit from more advertising and promotion with various suggestions as to how this could be done e.g., via posters, webinars, at conferences or more information on the website. The incentive behind this was to reach more women in BC as it appears that some workers may not be aware of the program or know who is eligible to apply. It is important to bear in mind that the application limit per agency was introduced because the fund was not large enough to support all applications received in it's first year, resulting in 29 women being turned down for a bursary. The cap was brought in to reduce this disappointment for women and workers as well as time spent on applications that could not be supported. Consideration should be given to how to manage increased applications that would result from enhanced promotion of the BBF Program if funding for the program is not increased. More clarity regarding the eligibility

of member programs who can apply may also be beneficial.

The application limit requires frontline workers to choose who to nominate, with one worker describing this as a difficult process, and some women suggested that removing the nomination requirement and promoting the program more widely might make the process fairer. However, without a substantial funding increase, the number of applications each agency can submit would remain limited, and enhancing promotion could make it harder for workers to decide which applications to put through. If the nomination process is removed, selection criteria may need to be developed to ensure the most equitable process. Again, workers felt that an application schedule that was published ahead of time might help if they were not able to put through all interested applicants in one round, as they could let them know when the next opportunity would be coming up, though this possibility also remains tied to available funds.

On a similar note, several evaluation participants suggested increasing the number of bursaries that are available e.g., by increasing the application limit per program, expanding the program beyond transition housing programs into the wider community, increasing the bursary amount, or allowing successful recipients to reapply. BCSTH is always exploring opportunities to maximise the fund and this is clearly a worthwhile endeavour.

Sharing information about other, similar opportunities was recommended by both workers and bursary recipients. This could help to mitigate issues that may arise when more women want to apply for a bursary than programs are able to put forward, as well as signpost women to other funding programs if they required additional supports. This work has been started as part of this evaluation process (appendix A) and BCSTH could share this information on the BBF Program webpage. Wider information regarding economic empowerment and financial literacy initiatives may also be beneficial, as financial literacy has been found to be a significant predictor of economic empowerment for IPV survivors (Postmus, Plummer, McMahon and Zurlo, 2013), and survivors who have experienced economic abuse often lack confidence in their ability to manage money (CCfWE, 2023). However, it should be borne in mind that economic education programs do not address systemic barriers impacting women's economic empowerment (Hahn and Postmus, 2014), and are not the solution to economic abuse; perpetrators need to be held accountable for the harm that they cause (Byrt, Cook & Burgin, 2023).

Finally, a couple of recipients stated that additional support to help research courses would have been beneficial, and one emphasised that finding affordable childcare she could trust was a barrier to pursuing education, wondering whether is something the BBF Program or anti-violence programs could support with e.g., through establishing partnerships with childcare providers. Indeed, research has shown that programs assisting survivors to achieve postsecondary education that improves their chances of finding well-paid work, is a proven way of supporting them to move out of poverty and violence, and is particularly effective when paired with advocacy services and support services such as childcare, as well as careers advice, financial literacy training, and asset building programs such as matched saving accounts (Hahn & Postmus, 2014).

3

Provide follow up support

One woman stated that she would have appreciated more fanfare to celebrate her success on receiving the bursary, for example through a token of congratulations such as a card, and some information regarding the number of bursaries awarded during that round and what they were awarded for. A snapshot of this information is available on the BBF website, and is updated regularly. This is something that could be shared directly with successful applicants.

Conclusion

It is clear from the current evaluation, as well as the literature reviewed in this report, that flexible financial assistance is an effective, dignified and empowering way of supporting survivors and their children to move forwards and recover after violence. While the road is long, and additional supports will inevitably be required to support women to reach their education and employment goals, stabilize their housing, and become financially independent while recovering from trauma, flexible funding has the potential to enhance their immediate safety, help them take the first step, keep going and protect their mental health and well-being. It also has the potential to strengthen the community and social services sector by providing an opportunity for women to bring their lived experience to this work: more than half of bursary recipients to date have applied for funds to pursue education and employment opportunities within the helping fields, and almost one-third were within the community and social services sector. Several of the women we spoke to during this evaluation talked about wanting to give back through employment and volunteering opportunities. Furthermore, being able to support women in a practical and tangible way was reported to be an empowering experience for anti-violence workers that enhances their job satisfaction and boosts morale in a sector that is challenged by inordinate rates of employee turnover. Finally, cost-savings analyses of other cash transfer programs have demonstrated the potentially significant savings that can be achieved by investing in such preventative measures, while enhancing the capacity of the sector.



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Appendix A: Financial, Educational & Employment Supports for IPV Survivors/Women in Canada⁹

SUPPORT	LEAD	OVERVIEW	AMOUNT	ACCESS
Canada				
National Emergency Survivor Support Fund https://ywcacanada.ca/what-we-do/projects-initiatives/nessfund/	Non-profit led (YWCA)	Flexible funding to support survivors to exit abuse. Can be used for rent; arrears; moving, storage; furniture; travel, gender-affirming care.	One-time financial support of up to \$2,000 CAD	Available to women, trans, two-spirit, and gender-diverse people 16+
December 6th Fund	Non-profit led (YWCA) *In certain cities only	Interest-free microloans for women, gender diverse people fleeing abuse. For housing-related costs.	Up to \$500 CAD (Flexible & affordable repay.)	18+, have income (incl. IA), own bank account, referral from agency, proof of expense.
Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women https://www.soroptimist.org/our-work/live-your-dream-awards/index.html	Soroptimist Foundation of the Americas *In certain Canadian cities only Western Canada: https://www.wcsoroptimist.org/clubs Eastern Canada: https://www.ecsoroptimist.org/	Cash award to offset any costs associated with efforts to attain higher education, such as books, childcare, tuition and transportation and give women the resources required to improve their education, skills and employment prospects.	One-time education awards. • Club level awards average \$1,000 USD. • Club level recipients eligible for regional awards of \$3,000 or \$5,000 USD. • Regional level recipients for one of three international awards of \$10,000 USD.	Women who provide the primary financial support for their families. Over half of the Live Your Dream Awards recipients are survivors of domestic violence, trafficking or sexual assault.
British Columbia				
Survive to Thrive https://ywcavan.org/survive-to-thrive	YWCA Metro Vancouver	Free 12-week program. Offers specialized employment and skills training services. Support from trained trauma and violence-informed career advisors and facilitators.	Includes financial supports such as transit, food cards, work clothing, child care and financial completion bonuses *Subject to funding and participant eligibility	For survivors of violence and/or abuse.
Axis https://ywcavan.org/axis	YWCA Metro Vancouver	12-week, trauma-informed one-to-one employment program. Supported by careers advisor to develop an employment or training plan to achieve sustainable employment or further education. Services available in English, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, Dari, Mandarin, Cantonese, Filipino, and Ukrainian.	Participants may have access to financial assistance for food, work clothing, transit and childcare.	Self-identified immigrant women who have experienced violence and are residents of BC. In-person services available in Metro Vancouver as well as virtually throughout BC
BC Housing Education Awards Program https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/tenants-programs-resources/education-awards-program	BC Housing	Helps residents in a household directly receiving subsidy from BC Housing, or receiving rental assistance through the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) at the start of courses pursue their educational goals. Bursaries and awards are for post-secondary education and training .	There are 7 different awards available and amounts range from \$750-\$1,000.	In addition to being a resident in a household directly receiving subsidy from BC Housing or receiving rental assistance through the Rental Assistance Program at the start of courses, eligibility criteria vary for each of the 7 awards available.

⁹ Adapted from Cameron, A.I., Tedds, L.M., & Yu, W. (2023) *Economic Security Policy and Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence Is there a Role for Cash Transfers in Addressing Intimate Partner Violence?* Page 24. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4487319>

SUPPORT	LEAD	OVERVIEW	AMOUNT	ACCESS
British Columbia				
Giver Her Wings Award	Soroptimist International (SI) of the TriCities https://soroptimisttricitie.org/our-programs/live-your-dream-awards-programs/ SI Victoria-Westshore https://www.sivw.ca/education-awards-open	This financial award is similar to Live Your Dream Award, in helping women return to school to further their education, except applicants need not have dependents.	Variable. SI Victoria Westshore currently offer x3 \$1,500 CAD awards	SI Victoria-Westshore Give Her Wings Award recognizes women who have transitioned out of the foster care system in Canada.
Spread Your Wings Award	Soroptimist International (SI) of the TriCities https://soroptimisttricitie.org/our-programs/live-your-dream-awards-programs/	Education award for female immigrants or refugees	\$1,000 CAD award	Female immigrants or refugees who arrived in BC in last 5 years and enrolled in/planning to attend vocational/ skills training or undergraduate degree.
Single Mothers Support Fund https://causewecare.org/initiative/single-mothers-support-fund/	Cause We Care Foundation	Financial assistance to help single mothers strengthen educational and economic capacity by helping them gain new, or update existing, skills and qualifications with funds not provided by government or any other agency.	Tuition not covered by the fund but ancillary needs such as day care, school supplies, computers etc., are.	Single mothers in Lower Mainland facing financial barriers and been nominated by affiliated frontline organizations
Beadie Luminaries Scholarship Program https://beedieluminaries.ca/	Beadie Luminaries	Scholarships for students with potential who are facing financial adversity, including: • Single Parents Award for Knowledge and Resilience (SPARK) • Refugee and Immigrant Student Education (RISE) • Grade 12 student awards	SPARK and RISE: • \$11,00 per year up to 4 years per full-time student • \$5,500 per year up to 6 years per part-time student • Grade 12s: • \$44,000 per student / 4-yr undergrad degree • \$22,000 per student / 2-yr college diploma/ certificate/ trade school foundation program	Also have further scholarships for Beadie Luminaries alumni
The Lobstick Foundation Bursaries https://lobstickfoundation.org/grants-and-donations/	The Lobstick Foundation	Financial assistance for women and girls in Canada of all backgrounds seeking professional, educational, or entrepreneurial skills development but unable to do so due to personal or financial circumstances.	Unknown	• Applications available on website. • Bursary applications can be submitted by individuals. • Grant applications are also available and can be submitted by organizations.
StrongerBC Future Skills Grant https://www.educationplannerbc.ca/future-skills-grant	Government of BC and Education Planner BC	Open to British Columbians aged 19 years or older – regardless of financial need – for eligible short-term skills training at public post-secondary institutions.	Up to \$3,500 per person	Connect with your local WorkBC centre to explore eligibility
Single Parents Employment Initiative https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/on-assistance/employment-planning/spei	Government of BC	Training and support to single parents receiving IA/DA to support them to secure a long-term job.	Up to 2years funded training or paid work experience, childcare costs during training or work placements as well as for the first year of employment, and transport costs.	Participants can access supports from WorkBC Employment Services and receive health supplement coverage for a full year after leaving income assistance for employment.

SUPPORT	LEAD	OVERVIEW	AMOUNT	ACCESS
British Columbia				
Hardship Assistance https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/hardship-assistance?keyword=hardship&keyword=assistance	Government of BC	One month's assistance for those ineligible for IA and DA	\$560 (\$760 with child) + \$75-375 (\$150-570) shelter	Must meet income and asset requirements of BCEA
BCEA Persons Fleeing Abuse Alert https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/case-administration/persons-fleeing-abuse	Government of BC	Exempts IA/DA recipients from citizenship rules, work search obligations (6 months)	N/A	IA/DA recipients
BCEA Persons Fleeing Abuse, Supplement (Moving, Transport, Living Costs) https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/case-administration/persons-fleeing-abuse	Government of BC	To help IA/DA recipients fleeing abuse gain safety and independence	N/A	IA/DA recipients
Alberta				
Escaping Abuse Benefit https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-costs-leave	Government of Alberta	Help for victims to establish household in community, stay independent from abuser	\$1,083	Issued on one-time basis if do not qualify for Income Support.
Personal Benefit for Telephone & Transportation https://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWonline/IS/4859.html		Financial support to access services for independence and safety	\$33/mo. (tel.); \$66/mo. (transport) –up to 6 months	Supplementary benefit under Income Support
Newfoundland				
Victims of Violence Special Needs Benefits https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/policymanual/incomesupport/special-needs-benefits/	Government of Newfoundland	Anyone who self identifies as an IPV victim can receive emergency transport to a safe place, regardless of distance. Start-up allowance available to assist Income Support clients to move to new home.	Start-up allowance: \$500 island; \$600 coast (with one kid \$600; \$750)	Those not in receipt of Income Support may qualify for allowance during shelter stay. Rent assistance may be appropriate to meet needs of victim.

SUPPORT	LEAD	OVERVIEW	AMOUNT	ACCESS
Quebec				
Emergency financial assistance https://www.quebec.ca/en/justice-et-etat-civil/systeme-judiciaire/processus-judiciaire/processus-judiciaire-au-criminel/accompagnement-victimes-crime/aide-financiere-personnes-victimes/quickly-leave-dangerous-environment	Government of Quebec (requested through helpline; must be done by front-line staff)	Help victims of IPV and sexual violence to quickly leave a dangerous environment.	Unclear *No money is given directly to victims.	Must meet criteria of having to leave unsafe place/receive emergency medical care related to the violence.
<i>Des Jardins Mutual Assistance Fund</i> https://www.desjardins.com/ca/about-us/social-responsibility-cooperation/responsible-financial-products-services/solidarity-based-finance/mutual-assistance-fund/index.jsp	Locally participating community organizations	Helps people in financial difficulty	Survivors can receive free budget counselling and (subject to certain conditions) loans with payment terms adapted to their financial capacity.	Must meet income and asset requirements of BCEA
Toronto				
<i>CUPE 3902 Sexual and Domestic Violence Survivors Fund</i> https://cupe3902.org/unit-1/benefits/sf/	CUPE	Member-driven fund to provide immediate, individualized support for members who are survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence.	Fund allocated \$25,000 CAD per year. \$5,000 cap per person per fund year and \$15,000 total cap per person.	Due to the unique and varied needs of survivors, fund deliberately does not define all eligible expenses - members are invited to submit claims for any expenses they consider eligible
<i>CUPE 3903 Sexual Assault Survivor</i> https://3903.cupe.ca/sassf/#:~:text=The%20Sexual%20Assault%20Survivor%20Fund,legal%20support%20and%20lost%20wages	CUPE	The fund supports survivors offset costs such as counselling, legal support and lost wages.	Fund of \$50,000 CAD per year. \$3000 cap per person per year. (Committee will consider adjusting yearly maximum based on need.)	Administered 3 times per year except in emergency situations where members can apply on an ongoing basis.

Appendix B: BBF Information Sheet

BC Society of Transition Houses Bursary Fund

The BC Society of Transition Houses' BCSTH Bursary Fund (BBF) assists women¹⁰ to strengthen their educational and economic capacity and security following experiences of violence.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it disproportionately impacts women, the BCSTH Bursary Fund continues to focus on financial assistance for women wishing to gain new, or update existing skills and qualifications as well as any COVID-19 specific needs that relate to achieving these goals. The BBF will be available for women who have experienced violence and have accessed services from BCSTH member programs in BC.

The BBF is a one-time only grant (minimum \$500, maximum \$3000) for women who have experienced violence from an intimate partner to help them achieve their educational and employment goals.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Have accessed services from BCSTH member programs such as Transition House, Second Stage House, Third Stage House, Safe Home and PEACE Program within the past two years.
- Have been nominated by a staff member at a BCSTH member program.
- Demonstrate a need for the eligible courses, activities, services or materials as listed below.
- Demonstrate how the eligible courses, activities, services or materials will:
 - Create education and training opportunities that enhance job-related skills and credentials;
 - Increase a woman's capacity to support herself and any dependents; and
 - Support a woman and her dependents to have safe, meaningful and enjoyable lives.

Eligible expenses for the BCSTH Bursary Fund include:

- Tuition fees for a certificate, diploma or degree course from an accredited institution.
- Applying for recognition of credentials and/or qualifications from other provinces and/or countries.
- Equipment necessary for employment (including self-employment) or training (such as tools for woodwork, metalwork or catering), clothing (such as protective clothing or uniforms), or study aids (such as computers, books or other school supplies).
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as facemasks, face shields or other supplies required for business, employment or education purposes.
- Childcare services or transportation costs (e.g., bus pass, car insurance) to assist a woman to access training or education courses or work experience opportunities.

¹⁰ The term "women" refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women. BCSTH recognizes that while intimate partner violence has significant impacts on cis-gender women and girls in Canada, 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately impacted by experiences of violence.

Tax Information

- Receiving the BCSTH Bursary Fund may impact successful applicants’ Income Assistance and/or Disability payments. We strongly encourage you to check with your Employment and Assistance Worker and/or your support worker to determine if, and how, receiving the bursary could affect your payments before submitting the application.
- The BC Society of Transition Houses is required to provide all BBF recipients with a T4A. As such, successful applicants will need to provide BCSTH with their Social Insurance Number (SIN) upon being awarded the bursary.

Important Dates

BBF Application due by	Wednesday, February 1, 2023 @ 5pm PST
Shortlisted applicants will be notified	February 21
Phone interviews	February 22-23
Successful applicants will be notified	Monday, February 27, 2023
Bursary will be released to successful applicants	By end of March 2023

Bursary Terms

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) reserves the right to cancel the BBF agreement if:

- Any of BCSTH’s Vision, Mission, Approach and Principles are not followed by the BBF Recipient.
- The BBF Recipient is unable to follow the agreed upon bursary plan within a reasonable time period.

Appendix C: BBF Application Form

This application may take some time to complete. Please take your time. It is possible to save your work and return to it later. The staff member at the BCSTH member program who nominated you for the BBF is a resource for help and encouragement. If you have any questions about the application, please contact Hannah Lee at hannah@bcsth.ca and we will be happy to assist you.

1. Applicant information

Full Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Mailing Address:

2. What is your preferred method of communication for us to contact you?

Email address provided above

Phone number provided above

Alternate phone number or email:

3. What is the preferred method of bursary payment?

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

Cheque

3. Have you applied for BCSTH Bursary Fund in the past? Yes No

If yes, please provide the year you applied and the name of the BCSTH member program who supported your application.

5. Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes No

6. Do you have dependents? Yes No

If yes, the number of dependents and their ages:

7. Are you currently receiving Income Assistance and/or Disability payments? Yes No

15. Please describe the services you received.

16. Tell us about your educational history.

17. Tell us about your employment history.

18. What are your education/training/employment goals?

19. How much money are you requesting from the BBF? (minimum \$500, maximum \$3000)

20. How would you use the money you receive from the BBF? Please show the breakdown of the expenses that this bursary would cover. For example:

Expenses	Amount	Expenses	Amount
Tuition	\$1,500		
Childcare costs	\$600		
Uniform	\$120		
Total Amount Requesting	\$2,220		

21. Have any of the expenses listed above been covered by other bursaries or scholarships? If yes, please describe the other payments.

22. Would any of the funds you receive from the BBF be allocated to address needs or impacts related to COVID-19 and reaching your goals?

Yes No

- 23. If yes, please tell us how these funds will be used to address COVID-19 specific needs or impacts.**
- 24. How will the funds you receive from the BBF allow you to improve your economic capacity and security?**
- 25. If you have applied to, or plan to apply to an educational program, what school and program/course are you applying to? How long is the course?**
- 26. How would these courses, activities, services or materials create education and training opportunities that enhance your job-related skills and credentials?**
- 27. How would these courses, activities, services or materials increase your capacity to support yourself and any dependents?**
- 28. How would receiving the BBF help to improve your safety and well-being?**
- 29. What do you see as your greatest strength?**
- 30. What personal difficulties or challenges do you anticipate in completing the educational/employment plan you have proposed? How will you respond to these challenges?**

31. Is there any other information that you would like to share with us?

32. Please attach confirmation of expense costs. (e.g., tuition bill, screenshots or photos indicating cost of equipment, clothing or study aids, or application fees for recognition of credentials/qualifications.)

33. Please attach a letter of recommendation from the BCSTH member program where the applicant accessed services in the past 2 years. (It is suggested that the letter of recommendation includes: a. How long you have been working with and supporting the applicant; b. In what ways you have worked with and supported the applicant; c. Why you think the applicant is a good candidate for the BCSTH Bursary Fund; d. Anything else that you think the BBF Committee should know and take into consideration for the applicant.)

34. Option: Please attach optional Cover letter stating why you would be a good candidate for BBF.

BBF Application Check List

Before you submit the application, please check below boxes to ensure your application is complete. Please note that incomplete applications will not be considered for the bursary.

Completed application form

Letter of recommendation from a BCSTH Member Program where you accessed services

Confirmation of expense cost

Appendix D: Online Feedback Survey for Frontline Workers BC Society of Transition Houses Bursary Fund: Project Evaluation

The term women used throughout this survey refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women.

About this Project

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) has received funding from the Social and Planning Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to evaluate the BCSTH Bursary Fund (BBF). We want to learn how it has helped women and their children who have used it, as well as any impacts for the frontline workers supporting them. Your participation will help us to demonstrate the impacts of the BBF and increase and improve the fund to help more women, youth and children in BC who have experienced gender-based violence.

Eligibility Criteria

Participants must be frontline anti-workers in BC who have supported a woman to apply for the BCSTH Bursary fund.

Participation is Voluntary

Your participation is voluntary. You can skip any questions you do not feel comfortable to answer. You may choose to not participate or you may withdraw for any reason without penalty. If you decide to withdraw, simply close the survey window and do not submit your questionnaire. If and when you submit your final questionnaire, all responses will be anonymized and you will be unable to withdraw them. We anticipate the survey will take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality

This survey is anonymous (we will not ask you for your name, organization information or collect your IP address). However, we will collect your name and email address in a separate form after you submit your responses so that we can send you your e-gift card honorarium (see more information below). No identifying information will be linked to your survey responses. Your survey responses will be kept confidential and the data set being analyzed will be anonymous. Only the BCSTH project team will be able to access the survey responses and these will be stored in password protected computers.

What Will We Do with The Results?

The anonymous survey data will be collected in SimpleSurvey and analyzed using Excel before being summarized into a report and any identifying information will be removed. We will share the findings with project participants, including BBF recipients, BCSTH's member programs and the wider anti-violence sector, the project funders - SPARC BC, and any potential or future funders of the BBF program.

Honorarium

As a thank you for completing this survey we would like to email you a \$30 e-gift card of your choice. After submitting your survey responses, you will be taken to a new webform where you will be asked to enter your name and email address. Your name and email will not be connected to your survey responses. We need your email address so we can send you your gift card!

Follow up Focus Groups

The webform you will see after submitting your survey will also ask if you would like to take part in a focus group about the BBF with other frontline workers in BC who have supported women to apply. Focus groups will take place in fall and will be facilitated by BCSTH staff, and we are offering a \$100 e-gift card of your choice to focus group participants as a thank you for their time. Focus groups are anticipated to last between 1-2 hours and will take place online using Zoom unless an in-person focus group is requested.

Questions

If you have any questions, please [email Nicky] or call or email Hannah Lee on 604.669.6943 ext. 221 / hannah@bcsth.ca and we will be able to assist you. Please submit your survey responses by Friday, June 30th 2023.

Survey Questions

By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in the BBF evaluation project being carried out by the BC Society of Transition Houses.

Section 1: About You

1. Please select your age category:

16-19	40-49
20-29	50-59
30-39	60 or over

2. Please select the option that best reflects your ethno-cultural identity:

Indigenous (e.g., First Nation, Métis, Inuit)

Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali, etc.)

Caucasian/White (e.g., European)

East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, etc.)

Latin American (e.g., Brazilian, Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, Peruvian, etc.)

Pacific Islander/Polynesian (e.g., Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Cook Islander, etc.)

South Asian (e.g., Afghan, East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Filipino, etc.)

West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Iraqi, Iranian, Israeli, Turkish, etc.)

Multi-ethnic (please specify):

You do not have an option that applies to me. I identify as:

3. For how long have you worked in the anti-violence sector?

Less than 1 year

6-10 years

1-5 years

11 years or more

4. What type of Program do you work in? (please select all that apply).

Safe Home

Transition House

Second Stage House

Third Stage House

PEACE Program

Other e.g., STV or legal supports program (please describe):

5. Which region of BC is your program located in? (Please use the map below if you are unsure).

Vancouver Island and Powell River

Lower Mainland

Fraser Valley

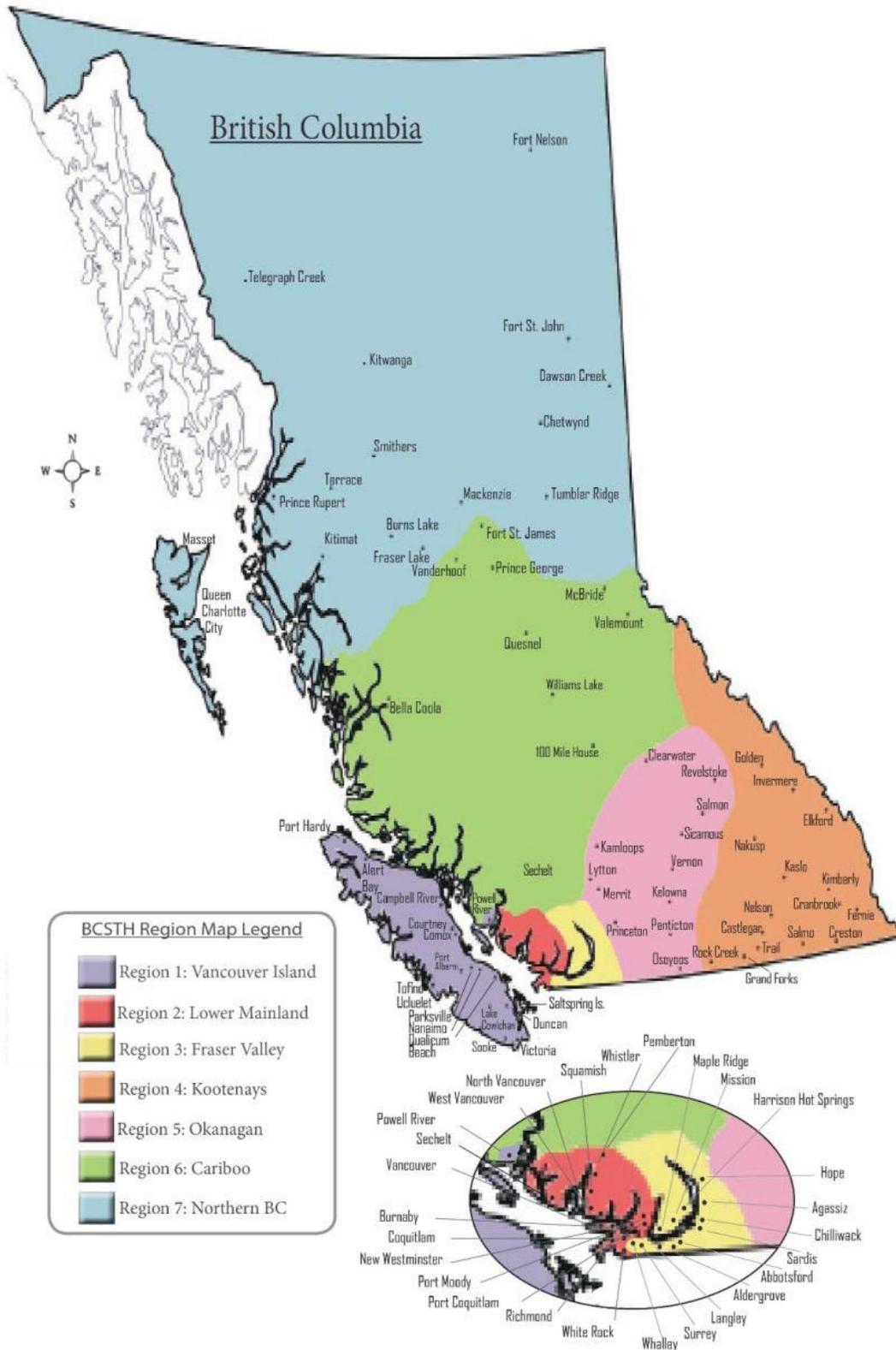
Kootenays

Okanagan

Cariboo

Northern BC

BC Society of Transition Houses: Member Region Map



6. Which size best describes the community where your agency is located?

- a. Small community (population up to 5,000 people)
- b. Small town (population between 5,000 and 29,999);
- c. Medium city (population between 30,000 and 99,999);
- d. Large city (population of 100,000 and over)
- e. Other (please specify)

Section 2: BBF Application background

1. How did you hear about the BBF?

- a. BCSTH newsletter
- b. BCSTH listserv
- c. BCSTH website
- d. From a co-worker
- e. Other, please explain:
- f. Can't remember

2. How did you feel when you heard about this initiative?

- a. Excited
- b. Interested
- c. Neutral
- d. Uninterested
- e. Discouraged

Comments:

3. How many women have you supported to apply for the BBF?

4. How many of those applications have been successful?

5. In what year(s) did you support a woman to successfully apply for and receive the bursary?

Select all that apply:

- a. 2019
- b. 2020
- c. 2021
- d. 2022
- e. 2023

6. Please provide a brief description of the successful application you supported. If you have supported multiple successful applications, please describe the most common or typical purpose. Please do not refer to bursary recipients by name e.g., please say recipient 1, recipient 2 etc. if necessary.

7. Are you aware of any other flexible financial assistance initiatives like the BCSTH Bursary fund?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. If yes, please describe the other financial assistance initiatives you are aware of e.g., name of fund, what they fund and approximate amounts.

Section 3: Impacts of Receiving the Bursary

1. For each bursary recipient you have supported, please describe any impacts you are aware the bursary has had on the woman's life, for example, on her independence, safety, or well-being, and that of any dependent children, if applicable. As a reminder, please do not include any names in your response. If you do not know how the bursary impacted the woman's life, please move to the next question.

2. The following questions ask about impacts of the BBF for yourself as a frontline worker. Please select the response that best indicates how much you agree with each statement below.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>The BBF gave me hope for the woman/women I supported</i>					
<i>The BBF made me feel like we were making a real difference in the life of the woman/women I supported</i>					
<i>Supporting a woman/women to receive the BBF made me feel more confident in my work</i>					
<i>Supporting a woman/women to receive the BBF made me feel more motivated in my work</i>					
<i>Supporting a woman/women to receive the Bursary Fund enhanced my overall job satisfaction</i>					

3. Please share any comments you may have about the impacts of supporting a woman/women to successfully apply for the bursary on your job satisfaction.

Section 4: Feedback on the BBF Application and Implementation Process

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the BBF application process?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Unsatisfied
- e. Very unsatisfied

2. How would you rate the support you received from BCSTH during the application process?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Helpful
- c. Neutral
- d. Unhelpful
- e. Very unhelpful
- f. Not applicable

3. How much would you agree that the woman/women you supported received the funds in a quick and straightforward manner?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Don't Know

4. Please explain a bit about how you/your agency decided which woman/women to nominate to receive the bursary. For example, did you nominate women who were in the most precarious financial situation (i.e., women who were unemployed, had debt etc.), women facing the most barriers (i.e., new comers, women with no family support, women with dependents, lower education level etc.), women who were already attending school or had business ideas or employment goals, women who were facing high safety risks, or other factors.

5. Have you supported any women to apply for the bursary who were not successful?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

6. If yes, what was that experience like for you?

7. Do you have any feedback about how the BBF, including the application process, could be improved?

8. Feel free to add any other comments on any of the above questions or anything else.

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this survey!

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions for Anti-Violence Workers

1. Do we have your consent to proceed with the focus group? Yes No

2. Can you tell us a bit more about how you decided which women to nominate to apply for the bursary? What was this experience like for you?

3. What do you think the impact of the BBF was for the woman/women you have supported? Have you kept in touch? Any idea of their situation now?

4. How well do you think this initiative has been able to serve or better address survivors and their children's:
 - a. Needs
 - b. Safety
 - c. Financial independence (education / training / employment)
 - d. Ability to obtain or maintain stable housing.

5. How have you, as frontline workers, been impacted by this program? What was the impact of supporting her through that process for you? What has BBF meant for you?

6. Please tell us about any challenges you encountered with the BBF initiative.

7. What are one or two things you would change to improve the initiative?

8. Is there anything we haven't asked about today that you would like to share?

Appendix F: Online Feedback Survey for Bursary Recipients BC Society of Transition Houses Bursary Fund: Project Evaluation

The term women used throughout this survey refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women.

About this Project

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) is evaluating the BCSTH Bursary Fund (BBF), which supports women with experiences of violence to access a bursary for education and employment opportunities that enhance their job-related skills and credentials. We want to learn what difference it has made, if any, for the women who have used it and any dependents they may have. Your participation in this survey will help us understand the impact the bursary has had on women, youth and children in BC who have experienced gender-based violence.

If you did not use the bursary funds as planned, that is okay as we understand that there are many circumstances that impact survivors' plans and we would still appreciate your feedback on the BBF process.

Eligibility Criteria

Participants must be survivors who have received a BCSTH bursary.

Participation Requirements

We anticipate the survey will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Please submit your survey responses by **Friday, September 8th, 2023**.

Participation is Voluntary

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw for any reason without penalty. If you decide to withdraw, simply close the survey window and do not submit your questionnaire. If and when you submit your final questionnaire, all responses will be anonymized and you will be unable to withdraw them.

Confidentiality

This survey is anonymous (we will not ask you for your name, contact information or collect your IP address). No identifying information will be linked to your survey responses. Your survey responses will be kept confidential and the data set being analyzed will be anonymized. Only the BCSTH project team will be able to access survey responses.

After submitting your questionnaire, we will ask you for your contact information (name and email address) **in a separate form that is not linked to your survey responses**. We will use this information to send you an e-gift card honorarium (see more information below). This contact information will be stored confidentially on password protected computers by the BCSTH Team and destroyed after seven years.

What Will We Do with The Results?

The anonymous survey data will be collected in SimpleSurvey and analyzed using Excel before being summarized into a report. We will share the findings with project participants who tell us they would like to receive a copy, BCSTH's member programs and the wider anti-violence sector, as well as the project funders - SPARC BC, and any future or potential funders for the BBF.

Honorarium

As a thank you for completing this survey, we would like to email you a \$60 e-gift card of your choice (e.g., Tim Hortons, Starbucks, President's Choice, Indigo, Amazon etc.). After submitting your survey responses, you will be taken to a new webform where you will be asked to enter your name and email address so we may send you the e-gift card. **Your name and email will not be connected to your survey responses.**

Follow Up Interview

After submitting your survey, we will also ask if you would like to take part in an individual interview about the BBF with a member of the BCSTH team via Zoom, (or by phone or in-person if you prefer). Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and there are no costs to you by not participating. During the interview we would ask you about your experience of receiving the bursary – what you used it for and any impacts it had for you. We are offering an additional \$100 e-gift card of your choice to people who complete an interview as a thank you for their time. We anticipate the interview may take between 30 minutes to one hour.

Are There Any Risks Involved in Taking Part?

1. There may be a risk an abuser could find out about your participation based on where and how you fill out the online questionnaire. If you have any concerns that your device may be being monitored by an abuser, but you still wish to participate in this survey, you may wish to use a different device (e.g., that of a trusted friend or relative, a public computer at your local library, etc.). You may also wish to open and complete the survey using a 'private' or 'incognito' window. As a reminder, participation is entirely voluntary.
2. The survey questions are not designed to be invasive or distressing, but may touch on topics and/or situations that trigger negative feelings or memories. A list of resources that you can access for support is provided at the end.
3. There may be a risk an abuser could find out about your participation based on how you choose to receive your electronic gift card honorarium. You will receive an email containing the digital gift card with a thank you message for completing the questionnaire from the BCSTH Team. If you have any concerns that your personal emails could be accessed by an abuser, you might want to provide an alternate email address in the web form you will see after submitting your survey responses (e.g., that of a trusted friend or relative, support worker etc.) You may also contact Hannah Lee on 604.669.6943 ext. 221 if you would prefer to receive this gift card another way e.g., we could mail you a physical gift card to a safe location of your choice.

Contact Us If You Need Support or Have Any Questions About This Survey

If you have any questions at all about this survey (e.g., relating to the content, purpose, informed consent etc.) or if you require any support to complete this survey (e.g., translation, interpretation services, or if you would prefer to complete the survey by phone), please [email Nicky] or call or email Hannah Lee on 604.669.6943 ext. 221 / hannah@bcsth.ca and we will be able to assist you.

Please select how you would like to proceed:

- I understand the information above and wish to proceed to the survey questions.
- I would prefer not to participate in this survey.

[If they chose to decline, the online survey took them to a new page with the following message:

Thank you for your consideration regarding participating in the BBF evaluation survey. We appreciate your time and as a reminder, choosing not to participate does not carry any risk or consequences for you.]

By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in the BBF evaluation project being carried out by the BC Society of Transition Houses. All questions are voluntary.

The questions in this section will help us to better understand who is responding to this survey (e.g., your background, age etc.)

1. Please select your age category:

- a. 18-29
- b. 30-39
- c. 40-49
- d. 50-59
- e. 60 or over

2. What gender do you identify with?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Trans
- d. Non-binary
- e. Other

3. Please select the option that best reflects your ethno-cultural identity:

- a. Indigenous (e.g., First Nation, Métis, Inuit)
- b. Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali, etc.)
- c. Caucasian/White (e.g., European)
- d. East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, etc.)
- e. Latin American (e.g., Brazilian, Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, Peruvian, etc.)
- f. Pacific Islander/Polynesian (e.g., Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Cook Islander, etc.)
- g. South Asian (e.g., Afghan, East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- h. Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Filipino, etc.)
- i. West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Iraqi, Iranian, Israeli, Turkish, etc.)
- j. Multi-ethnic (please specify):
- k. You do not have an option that applies to me. I identify as:

4. Do you identify as a Canadian immigrant or refugee?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to say

5. If you answered yes, how long have you lived in Canada?

- a. Less than one year
- b. Between 1-5 years
- c. Between 6-10 years
- d. 11 years or more

6. Do you have any disabilities?

- a. Mental
- b. Physical
- c. Sensory
- d. Multiple
- e. Other (please specify):
- f. None

7. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If you are currently enrolled, please select the highest degree that you have already received.

- a. High school – no diploma
- b. High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., General Educational Development (GED))
- c. Trade/technical/vocational training
- d. Associate degree (2 years)
- e. Bachelor's degree (3 or more years)
- f. Post-graduate degree
- g. Other, please describe:

8. What is your employment status? (Check all that apply):

- a. Employed
- b. Self-Employed
- c. Unemployed (i.e., not working but seeking employment)
- d. Not in the labour force (i.e., not working and not seeking employment)
- e. In training/education

9. If you are employed or self-employed, what is your job and area of work e.g., social services, hospitality, healthcare, education, government etc.?

10. What is your approximate annual income?

- a. Less than \$25,000 CDN
- b. \$26,000-\$45,000 CDN
- c. \$46,000-\$65,000 CDN
- d. \$66,000-\$85,000 CDN
- e. \$86,000-\$105,000 CDN
- f. More than \$105,000 CDN

11. If you are currently in training/education, what level of education are you in?

- a. High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., General Educational Development (GED))
- b. Trade/technical/vocational training
- c. Associate degree (2 years)
- d. Bachelor's degree (3 or more years)
- e. Post-graduate degree
- f. Other, please describe:

12. If you are currently in training/education, what is the title of the course are you taking? E.g., 'nursing' or 'construction'

13. Do you have any dependent children (biological, stepchildren, foster or any other children you are raising)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. If yes, how many dependent children do you have?

15. Do you have any other dependent family members?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. If yes, please describe

Section 2: BBF Application background

The questions in this section ask about how you used the bursary funds. As a reminder, if you did not use the bursary funds as planned, that is okay as we understand that there are many circumstances that impact survivors' plans and we would still appreciate your feedback on the BBF process.

1. In what year did you receive the bursary?

- a. 2019
- b. 2020
- c. 2021
- d. 2022
- e. 2023

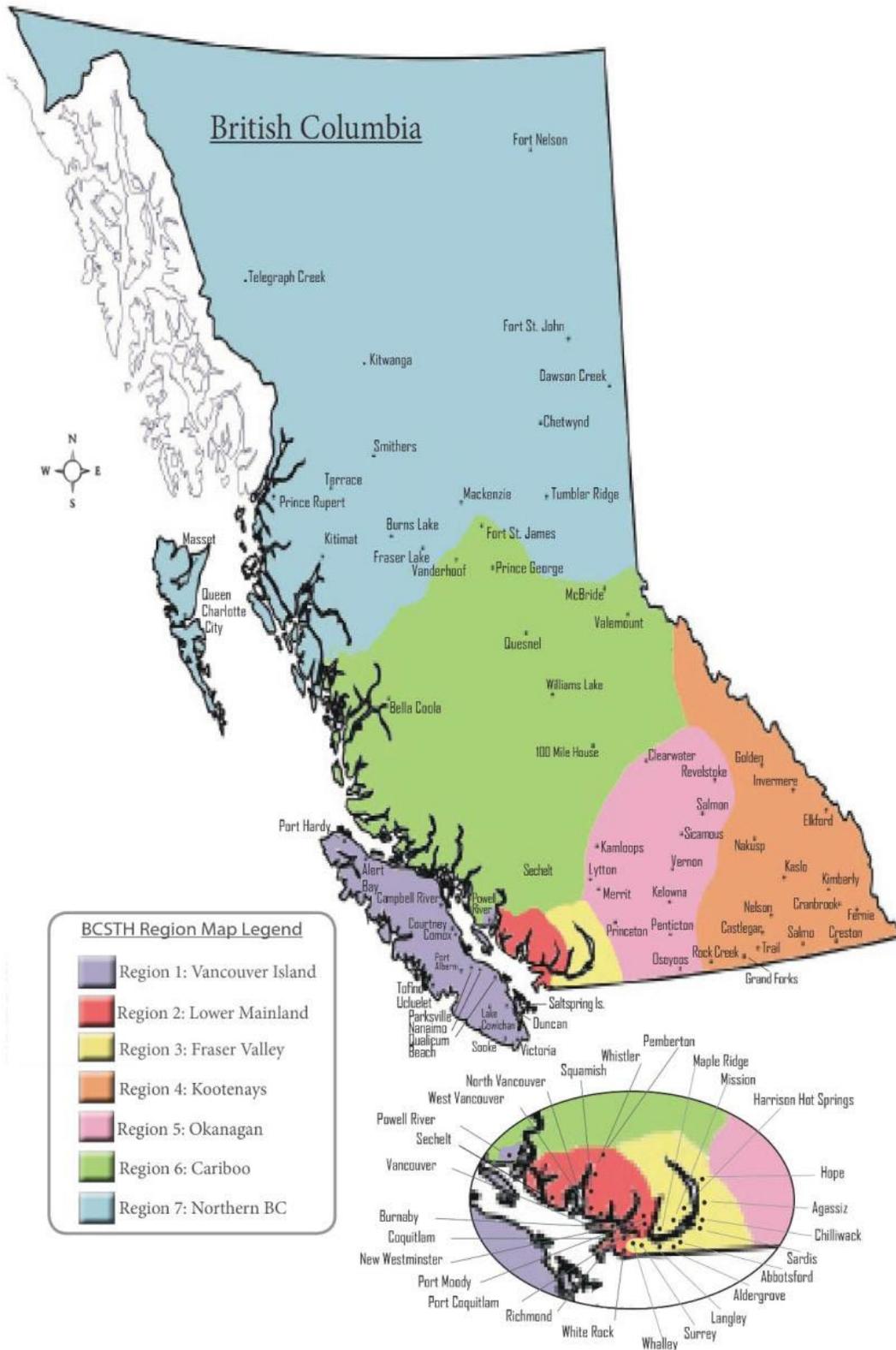
2. What type of program did you access that supported you to apply for the bursary?

- a. Transition House
- b. Second Stage House
- c. Third Stage House
- d. Safe Home
- e. PEACE Program
- f. Other, e.g., Stopping the Violence (STV) Counselling, Legal supports programs etc.
- g. Unsure

3. Which region of BC was the program located in? (Please use the map below if you are unsure).

- a. Vancouver Island and Powell River
- b. Lower Mainland
- c. Fraser Valley
- d. Kootenays
- e. Okanagan
- f. Cariboo
- g. Northern BC
- h. Unsure

BC Society of Transition Houses: Member Region Map



4. Which size best describes the community where the program you accessed is located?

- a. Small community (population up to 5,000 people)
- b. Small town (population between 5,000 and 29,999);
- c. Medium city (population between 30,000 and 99,999);
- d. Large city (population of 100,000 and over)
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. Unsure

5. How did you hear about the BBF?

6. How much money did you receive?

7. What did you apply to use the funds for? (Check all that apply):

- a. Education/training related costs e.g., tuition fees, study aids etc.
- b. Childcare
- c. To start a business
- d. Transportation costs
- e. Job related costs (e.g., tools, uniforms etc.)
- f. Other (please describe):

8. Please tell us more specifically what you applied to use the funds for, for example if you applied for funds to help with training/education/employment related costs, please tell us more specifically what course you chose to study or what job/business you started:

9. What made you want to choose that course/type of work?

10. Were you able to use the funds as you had intended?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Somewhat

11. If you answered no or somewhat, please share how you ended up using the funds.

Section 3: Impacts of receiving the BCSTH Bursary

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements (please select one response per question)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
<i>The bursary helped to support my financial independence</i>						
<i>The bursary helped to improved my ability to support myself (and my children/dependents, if applicable)</i>						
<i>The bursary provided me with employment opportunities that I would otherwise not have been able to pursue</i>						
<i>The bursary provided me with training or education opportunities that I would otherwise not have been able to pursue</i>						
<i>Receiving the bursary helped me to achieve my career goals</i>						
<i>The bursary contributed to restoring my self-worth</i>						
<i>Receiving the bursary helped to relieve my stress</i>						
<i>The bursary supported me to find and/or maintain stable housing</i>						
<i>The bursary helped to increase my safety</i>						
<i>The bursary helped to increase my children's safety</i>						
<i>Applying for and receiving these funds was an empowering experience for me</i>						

Comments:

2. Do you feel that the bursary has impacted or changed your life (and your children or any other dependent's lives, if applicable)?

- a. Yes. If so, please tell us how (please consider short and longer term impacts of receiving these funds)

- b. No. If not, please tell us why?

- c. Not sure. Any comments about that?

3. Did you also access other funds to support you to achieve the goal you wrote about in your BBF application such as the Single Mothers Support Fund (Cause We Care Foundation), National Emergency Survivor Support Fund (NESS Fund, YWCA Canada), or other funding sources.

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. If yes, please describe e.g., source(s), amount(s) and the use of the funds.

Section 4: Feedback on the BBF Application and Implementation Process

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the BBF application process?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Unsatisfied
- e. Very unsatisfied

2. How would you rate the support you received from the program staff who assisted you with this application?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Helpful
- c. Neutral
- d. Unhelpful
- e. Very unhelpful

3. How would you rate the support you received from the BCSTH staff who assisted you with the BBF?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Helpful
- c. Neutral
- d. Unhelpful
- e. Very unhelpful
- f. Not applicable

4. How much would you agree that the funds were easy to access e.g., via e-transfers, cheques etc.?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

5. How much would you agree that the funds were available when required?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

6. How satisfied were you with the trauma and violence informed approach of the BBF program?

(A trauma and violence informed approach is holistic, empowering, strengths-focused, collaborative and reflective and recognizes that people accessing services may be affected by trauma and violence.)

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Unsatisfied
- e. Very unsatisfied
- f. Unsure

7. How important are trauma and violence informed services to you?

- a. Very important
- b. Important
- c. Neutral
- d. Unimportant
- e. Very unimportant
- f. Unsure

8. How would you change the BBF application process to better meet the needs of applicants in future?

9. Please share any challenges you experienced after receiving the Bursary Funds.

10. Please share any unexpected results you experienced after receiving the Bursary Funds.

11. Feel free to add any other comments about the questions in the survey or anything else you want to share about the BCSTH Bursary Fund.

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this survey!

Please submit your survey responses using the button below. After submitting your responses, you will see a link to a new web form - please use these questions to tell us which gift card you would like and if you would like to be contacted to do a follow up interview. As a reminder, your survey responses will not be connected to the information you submit in the next web form.

THANK YOU for completing this survey!

Please complete the form linked below to **get your e-gift card** and let us know if you would like to do a follow up interview.

The information you submit in the next form will not be linked to your survey responses!

[survey link]

If taking part in today's survey caused you any distress and you feel like you need to talk to someone for support, here are some resources you can connect with. If you feel like you need additional support, please [email] and we will connect you with a counsellor in BC.

VictimLinkBC

This toll-free, confidential, help line connects you to safe emergency shelter, counselling programs and other treatment and healing programs in British Columbia and the Yukon.

Call or text 1-800-563-0808 any time, day or night.

Reach them by email at VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca People who are deaf, hard of hearing or experience difficulty with speech can use TELUS IP Relay. Call 711 to use this free and confidential service.

VictimLinkBC provides service in many languages, including many North American Aboriginal languages.

KUU-US Crisis Line

The KUU-US Crisis Line Society (<https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com/>) provides a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia.

KUU-US Crisis Line can be reached toll-free at 1-800-588-8717. Alternatively, individuals can call direct into the Youth Line at 250-723-2040 or the Adult Line at 250-723-4050.

KUU-US services are for First Nations, by First Nations, and all crisis response personnel are certified and trained in Indigenous cultural safety bringing an understanding of First Nations history and trauma from the residential school to their roles.

Appendix G: Interview Questions for Bursary Recipients

1. Do I have your consent to proceed with the interview? Yes No
2. Tell me a bit about yourself, for example where are you located in BC, do you have any children or other dependents, how do you typically spend your time?
3. When did you receive the BBF bursary, and what did you apply to use it for?
4. What program were you accessing at that point and how did you find out about the BBF?
5. Can you tell me a bit more about the application process? What was that experience like for you?
6. What did you use the funds for?
7. What difference did receiving the bursary make for you?
8. How well did the bursary meet your needs? In other words, what were you hoping to get from it and how much of that has been met? Please give examples.
9. If applicable: We'd love to hear about any impacts of the bursary on your children or other dependents. Please tell us about any direct or indirect benefits.
10. Have you faced any challenges when accessing or using the funds? Any challenges to achieving the goal you had for the funds?
11. Did you continue to work with your support worker to achieve the goals you had in mind for these funds? What difference did having this support make for you?
12. Is there anything that surprised you in terms of this bursary and support for survivors of domestic violence? E.g., Was there anything about the bursary that you didn't anticipate? Is there anything that concerned you?
13. Do you have any suggestions for how the BBF initiative can be improved?
14. Anything else to add?



BC Society of
Transition Houses