



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 3.5

**Fund Development & Financial
Strategy Guide for Black-Led RCOs**



Fund Development & Financial Strategy Guide for Black-Led RCOs

Purpose:

This guide is designed to help Black-led Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) strengthen their funding readiness and build the financial infrastructure needed for long-term sustainability. It provides practical tools to identify funders, secure multiple revenue streams, and develop grant proposals that speak to the strengths and needs of our communities.

Why This Matters:

For too long, Black-led RCOs have faced systemic exclusion from traditional philanthropy and public funding streams. We are often under-capitalized, over-committed, and forced to rely on inconsistent grant cycles. But recovery is not short-term work. To build sustainable RCOs, we must invest in our financial foundations and advocate for funding that reflects the value and impact of Black-led recovery spaces.

What's Inside This Resource

Core Strategies for Black-Led Fund Development

- **Diversify Revenue Streams:**
Move beyond dependency on traditional grants. Incorporate sponsorships, fee-for-service programs, earned income, and membership models.
 - **Build Funder Relationships:**
Don't wait for a funding cycle to connect. Begin cultivating meaningful connections with program officers, donors, and peer organizations now.
 - **Challenge Bias in Philanthropy:**
Don't be afraid to name equity issues and advocate for more inclusive application processes and grant structures.
 - **Harness Community-Based Fundraising:**
Launch grassroots campaigns, benefit events, and social impact storytelling to activate your community as investors in your work.
-

Self-Assessment: Is Your RCO Funding-Ready?

Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following:

- Do we have a clearly articulated mission that aligns with funder goals?
- Are our financial systems in place to track and report funding and expenses?
- Do we have experience applying for grants or contracts?
- Are we cultivating long-term relationships with funders and donors?
- Can we clearly communicate our impact with data and stories?

If you answered “No” to any of these, it may be time to revisit your internal capacity and fund development strategy. Reach out to CAARD to explore coaching or consultation.

Developing a Strong Grant Proposal

- **Frame Your Impact with Intention:**
Use both data and cultural narratives to tell the story of why your RCO matters.
 - **Align with Funder Priorities Without Losing Your Voice:**
Tailor your proposal without diluting your mission. Authenticity builds trust.
 - **Budget Transparently:**
Reflect realistic costs—pay your staff, invest in growth, and don't undercut your value.
 - **Follow Through After Submission:**
Build post-award relationships, share wins, and stay connected for future funding.
-

Overcoming Common Barriers for Black-Led RCOs

- **Lack of General Operating Support:**
Focus on flexible funds that support infrastructure, not just programs.
- **Federal/State Grant Barriers:**
Consider fiscal sponsorship or contracting a grant writer with experience in compliance.
- **Underrepresentation in Philanthropy:**
Connect with funding collectives and intermediary groups supporting Black-led work (e.g., ABFE, Resource Generation, Southern Black Girls Fund).

- **Limited Capacity for Grant Writing:**
Partner with pro bono professionals, consultants, or CAARD's Fund Development Network to build internal skills.
-

Key Recommendation

Hire a Fund Development Professional

RCO leaders should not be solely responsible for writing grants and raising funds. Hiring or contracting a culturally competent fund development expert can transform your organization's sustainability and relieve burnout.

Need help? CAARD can connect you with Black-led grant consultants and offer technical assistance for building internal capacity.

Next Steps

1. Conduct an internal audit of your current funding mix.
 2. Identify 3–5 new funders, sponsors, or revenue pathways.
 3. Attend a fund development workshop or request CAARD coaching.
 4. Build a grant calendar and prepare early for renewals and deadlines.
 5. Subscribe to funder newsletters and equity-focused philanthropic networks.
-

Want support with this?

CAARD provides consulting, templates, and coaching for Black-led RCOs ready to build funding strategies that reflect their worth and long-term vision. www.caard.org | theecaard@gmail.com