



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 5.4

**Funding Justice: Fund Development &
Sustainability Guide for Black-Led RCOs**



Downloadable Resource 5.4 Funding Justice: Fund Development & Sustainability Guide for Black-Led RCOs

Purpose

Black-led RCOs cannot survive on scraps. This guide equips us to fight for sustainable funding streams that honor our work, fuel our vision, and allow us to expand without begging at doors that were never built for us.

Why This Matters

Money is political. The way dollars flow reveals whose lives are valued — and whose are dismissed. For decades, Black-led recovery organizations have been left underfunded while white-led institutions receive steady streams of government and philanthropic support.

We cannot build strong programs on weak foundations. Without funding justice, every peer hired, every space opened, every circle convened is at risk of collapse. Sustainability is not just about budgets — it's about survival, dignity, and the right to serve our people without apology.

Core Funding Priorities

- **Equitable Allocation of Government Grants** – Advocate for set-asides and priority scoring for Black-led RCOs.
 - **Break Down Barriers to Funding** – Push for simplified applications, multi-year grants, and accessible reporting requirements.
 - **Build Black Recovery Investment Funds** – Work with foundations, Black banks, and community trusts to seed funding streams we control.
 - **Diversify Revenue Streams** – Pair government and philanthropy with earned income, partnerships, and member-based support.
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Essential Skills for RCO Leaders

- Writing grants that frame recovery as racial justice, not charity
 - Budgeting for growth, sustainability, and peer compensation
 - Building relationships with funders while holding boundaries
 - Developing narratives that connect cultural healing to funder priorities
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Practices & Activities

1. Funding Equity Scan (25 minutes)

- *Setup:* Review local/state grant lists.
- *Instructions:* Highlight which organizations received major awards. Circle which are Black-led.
- *Debrief:* Identify gaps and prepare a statement demanding equity.

2. Grant Rewrite Workshop (30 minutes)

- *Setup:* Take a generic grant question (e.g., “Describe your program’s impact”).
- *Instructions:* Rewrite it in your own unapologetic, culture-rooted voice.
- *Debrief:* Share and refine — practice refusing to sanitize your story.

3. Sustainability Map (20 minutes)

- *Setup:* Draw three columns: Government | Philanthropy | Earned Income.
 - *Instructions:* Brainstorm 2–3 possible funding streams for each.
 - *Debrief:* Pick one to pursue in the next quarter.
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Quick Checklist

- ✓ Demand government set-asides for Black-led RCOs
- ✓ Identify and apply for one new funding stream this year
- ✓ Build relationships with at least two new funders
- ✓ Create a 3-part sustainability plan: government, philanthropy, earned income