

RIA, Inc.

ready•inspire•act



ria

FOUNDED: 2014

CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$1,060,000

CONTACT: Heather Wightman, Executive Director and Founder

PHONE: 774.249.8897

EMAIL: hwightman@readyinspireact.org

WEB: www.readyinspireact.org

Investment Opportunity

RIA seeks an investment of \$3.2M over two years to increase the number of individuals engaged with the RIA community from 81 to 125. The support will help RIA deepen the educational, employment, housing, and family support it provides to people who have been exploited in commercial sex. Funds will be used to build infrastructure to increase staff and expand the *SheFund*, which provides flexible resources necessary to address the unique challenges each survivor faces on the path to wholeness and healing.

Sex trafficking occurs when an individual is made to perform commercial sex acts using force, fraud, or coercion. It happens every day across the United States and the world and represents conservatively a \$30 billion industry globally. It happens to everyone regardless of age, race, or gender. Individuals at greater risk include BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ people, and/or folks who experience:

- Domestic violence or sexual abuse
- Financial stress
- Homelessness and housing insecurity
- Substance use disorder
- Disability (cognitive or physical)

RIA (ready•inspire•act) offers a way out of sexual exploitation that is grassroots and flexible. Its mission is to stand with and support people with experience in commercial sex and its associated exploitation, trafficking, and prostitution. RIA provides a range of community-based services, including peer mentorship and clinical therapy, as well as financial support with housing, educational, and training expenses. RIA knits together a community of survivors who provide accompaniment, care, and understanding to participants at every stage of the journey to wholeness and healing.

Two-Year Goals

- Increase the total number of RIA participants from 81 to 125 annually
- Expand the resources available by way of the *SheFund* to support survivors and their children to find and secure housing, education, and employment
- Increase peer mentorship, clinical therapy, case management, and group opportunities for individuals as they heal and exit from commercial sex

Ways to Invest

FINANCIAL

- \$100,000 for the *SheFund* provides flexible funding for at least ten individuals' unique needs to become independent, including housing and education
- \$65,000 funds a full-time Peer mentor to work with program participants
- \$80,000 funds a full-time communication/marketing position to grow RIA's visibility and reach

IN-KIND

- Join the Board of Directors to help lead RIA through the next chapter of growth
- Join the RIA Annual Gala Event Planning Committee and help identify corporate and individual event sponsors
- Host an informational gathering for your friends and family to learn about RIA

Leadership & Governance

Survivor professional mentors work alongside clinicians and as board members and volunteers, providing guidance on all of RIA's work. RIA's Executive Director and Founder, Heather Wightman has master's degrees in social work and public health and twenty-five years of working with federal, state, and human services programs related to violence prevention. RIA's Board of Directors includes seven women who have diverse backgrounds and expertise, including in law, marketing, engineering, education, medical services, nonprofit administration, and clinical practice.

RIA'S MODEL



“

We are fighting a war out here, and RIA is like a parachute of support coming down from the sky.

”

FORMER RIA PARTICIPANT



RIA – Working Towards Wholeness and Healing

RIA builds healing relationships to support people with experience in commercial sex. RIA accompanies survivors where they are in their lives, whether experiencing homelessness, living in a shelter, or in a more stable housing situation. RIA participants have been manipulated, threatened, or controlled by sex buyers and traffickers over months or years. Often humiliated by society, survivors' feelings of discouragement and isolation can be profound. Exploitation robs people of their born identities, it diminishes self-esteem, and hurts physically and emotionally. RIA walks with people as they feel value and joy and are seen and loved.

Mentorship – A Coach for Personal Discovery

RIA mentors meet with participants in the process of self-discovery and healing. This includes sharing stories of survivorship, and information about the challenges they face and life planning goals. A professional mentor is an anchor, a person who has had similar past experiences and can share their journey to wholeness and healing. Mentors and mentees typically connect in person weekly, and often talk on the phone and text daily. Weekly community support groups, in-person and virtual are hosted by mentors.

Therapy – Healing from Trauma

Therapy is critical to rebuilding self-awareness and strengthening coping skills to support a participant's ability to reduce harm in their lives. RIA's therapists demonstrate experience in understanding the complex layers of trauma in commercial sex. This includes awareness of how exploitation occurs and factors that may contribute to being at higher risk include gender and gender identity, race and ethnicity, and disability.



Each survivor’s path towards healing is unique and the support services they need must be tailored to meet them where they are on their journey. This is where RIA stands apart from other nonprofits.



PADMAJA SURENDRANATH,
RIA Board Treasurer

Key Investors

- SOCIAL INNOVATION FORUM (2023)
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF VICTIMS OF CRIME
- CUMMINGS FOUNDATION
- METROWEST HEALTH FOUNDATION
- FOUNDATION FOR METROWEST
- GARDINER HOWLAND SHAW FOUNDATION
- LINCOLN & THERESE FILENE FOUNDATION
- MIDDLESEX BANK
- THE BOSTON FOUNDATION
- THE PHILANTHROPY CONNECTION

Partners

- ASCENTRIA CARE ALLIANCE
- BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER AND BRIGHAM & WOMEN’S HOSPITAL
- FRAMINGHAM POLICE DEPT.
- JASMINE GRACE OUTREACH

SUPPORT TO TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE

Sustainably – Life Planning and Support for the Future

Most RIA participants need a variety of supports as well as financial backing to rebuild their lives. RIA provides support in finding and securing housing, treatment for substance use disorder, and education and job training, among other areas. RIA’s *SheFund* provides immediate supports which is the glue that allows people to fully exit commercial sex. Given that over 60% of RIA participants have children, flexible funding is critical in providing stability that allows for family reunification.

Advocacy and Education – Building Public Awareness

RIA offers a variety of workshops and presentations to help institutions, organizations, and community leaders understand the risks and impact of commercial sexual exploitation on a community, and how to recognize signs and get support to people in need.

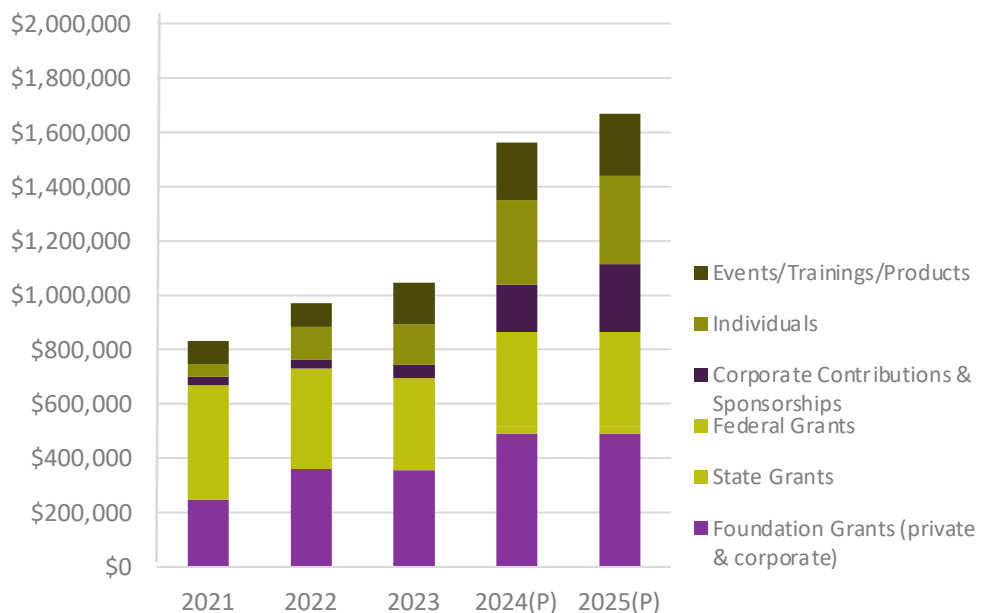
Survivor Professional Mentors – Experts with Experience

From the beginning, RIA has been survivor-informed, with a commitment to elevating the voices and lived experiences at every level of the organization - half of RIA’s team has past experience in commercial sex and of sex trafficking and exploitation, as do members of the Board of Directors.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2018, RIA underwent a strategic planning process that set a clear plan for organizational development. With a small team, RIA has been able to cultivate a healthy mix of public, foundation, and individual funding and has grown each source every year. Over the next two years, RIA will increase staff for their infrastructure to build program, communication, and development capacity.

Revenue by Source:



Success Story: Joya*

After leaving Cuba, Joya’s mother married a man she barely knew. Joya’s stepfather made her do things that she hated. By age 14, she left home, believing she would be better off on the streets. After weeks of couch surfing, Joya was befriended by an older man who groomed her into commercial sex, exploiting her body for profit. For the next 20 years, Joya faced homelessness, violence, sexual abuse, addiction, and prison. Through a weekly support group, she met a RIA mentor who got to know her better, building trust to begin one-on-one support.

Today, Joya is beginning to see a new life for herself. She recently enrolled in college to pursue a bachelor’s degree with the help of RIA’s *SheFund*. With new awareness and support from RIA, Joya continues her healing journey and dreams of someday being a nurse.

*identifying details of Joya’s case have been changed to protect her privacy



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that RIA tracks to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

| | FY 2023 | FY 2024 (P) | FY 2025 (P) |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| PROGRAM PERFORMANCE | | | |
| Number of participants | 81 | 105 | 125 |
| Number of participants in mentorships | 74 | 90 | 110 |
| Number of participants in therapy | 30 | 40 | 55 |
| Number of participants accessing <i>SheFund</i> | 80 | 90 | 110 |
| ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING | | | |
| Number of staff | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| Number of board members | 9 | 11 | 12 |
| Advisory Board | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Total Revenue | \$1,060,000 | \$1,500,379 | \$1,675,116 |

SOCIAL IMPACT

The commercial sex industry is a multi-dimensional threat: It deprives people of basic human rights and freedoms, it poses multiple health risks and consequences while exposing people to substantial levels of harm, and it fuels the growth of organized crime. The impact of sex trafficking goes beyond individual victims/survivors and can devastate the lives of people’s children, who may also become the targets of commercial sexual exploitation, and their communities. RIA’s holistic and comprehensive approach offers a model for how to build an infrastructure of support that can permanently transition individuals, and families, out of a dependence on commercial sex, decreasing harm and increasing wholeness and healing towards thriving.

| INDICATOR | 2023 | 2025 |
|--|------|------|
| % of participants completely out of commercial sex | 81 | 90 |
| % of participants who report an increase in housing safety | 34 | 45 |
| % of participants who experience a reduction in financial stress | 69 | 85 |