



**PREPARED BY: THE INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACTION**

BUILDING HEALING-CENTERED INFRASTRUCTURE FOR  
COMMUNITY SAFETY, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND  
SYSTEMS CHANGE

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## **IMPACT REPORT 2025**

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GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: NEW JERSEY • NEW YORK • ALABAMA • NATIONAL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: DR. JAMILA T. DAVIS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## From Impact to Infrastructure

In 2025, Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) solidified its role as a national leader in healing-centered community safety, workforce development, and systems change. What began as community-rooted programming has matured into a multi-state, multi-sector infrastructure supporting violence prevention, leadership development, trauma-informed care, and workforce readiness.

Across the year, IRSJA moved intentionally from project-based implementation to ecosystem building—strengthening organizations, training practitioners, developing curriculum and intellectual property, convening national leaders, and laying the groundwork for sustainable workforce pathways. IRSJA's work in 2025 demonstrates not only reach and impact, but organizational readiness for scale, replication, and long-term public investment.

## National Reach and Community Impact

In 2025, IRSJA delivered programs, training, technical assistance, and convenings across New Jersey, New York, Alabama, and nationally, directly serving and supporting communities in East Orange, Newark, Atlantic City, Birmingham, and New York City.

Through this work, IRSJA functioned as both an implementation partner and a backbone organization, supporting frontline practitioners while strengthening local and regional systems. A cornerstone of IRSJA's national impact was the Pull Up for Peace National Conference, hosted in Atlantic City. Over four days, the convening brought together 774 participants representing more than 330 organizations from 23 states and Washington, D.C., positioning Atlantic City as a national hub for healing-centered violence prevention.

The conference generated new cross-city collaborations, reenergized frontline workers, and elevated community-based leadership at a national scale. In recognition of this impact, IRSJA received an official resolution from the City of Atlantic City, affirming the organization's civic and public safety contributions.

## Education, Training, and Workforce Foundations

Education and leadership development were central to IRSJA's 2025 strategy. The organization delivered three cohorts of its Community Practitioner Program, anchored by the Agents of Change curriculum. Two cohorts were hosted at Kean University, and one cohort was delivered at Miles College, further strengthening IRSJA's alignment with higher education institutions and demonstrating the transferability of its model across regions.

In 2025, IRSJA also formalized its intellectual property by developing an Agents of Change textbook, transforming lived experience-driven training into a standardized, teachable, and replicable educational resource. This milestone marked a shift toward workforce-aligned curriculum design and credential-ready instruction.

Building on this foundation, IRSJA launched its first Incredible Messenger University (IMU) certification program, designed to train Crisis Management System (CMS) workers. This initiative represents a significant step toward formal workforce certification, signaling IRSJA's readiness to engage with workforce systems, credentialing pathways, and Eligible Training Provider List (IETPL) alignment.



## Program Innovation and Curriculum Development

Throughout 2025, IRSJA expanded its curriculum portfolio to meet the evolving needs of communities and systems. New and enhanced curricula included the Junior Violence Interrupter Program, We Got Us peer mental health programming, Healing the Wounded Healer, Be the Changemakers, I Love Me More, and Lead Her Healing. Together, these programs address the full continuum of community safety—from prevention and youth leadership to adult workforce development, trauma-informed care, and survivor-centered healing.

These curricula are not standalone products; they are designed as stackable, workforce-relevant pathways that support community members in transitioning from lived experience to professional roles in violence prevention, mental health support, civic engagement, and peer leadership.

## Organizational Stabilization and Systems Support

In addition to direct programming, IRSJA played a critical stabilization role in 2025 by providing technical assistance, data organization, and systems support to partner organizations. A key example was IRSJA's work with Partners Uplifting Our Daughters and Sons in East Orange, where IRSJA supported program documentation, data alignment, and reporting connected to state-funded violence prevention efforts.

This work underscores IRSJA's capacity to operate not only as a service provider, but as a systems-strengthening partner—helping organizations meet compliance requirements, strengthen infrastructure, and sustain public investment.

## Research, Media, and Narrative Change

IRSJA continued to integrate research, storytelling, and media as essential components of public safety and systems change. Through documentary work, including Set Her Free, IRSJA elevated survivor narratives, supported policy conversations, and documented the real-world impact of community-based interventions. Film and media were used not as supplemental tools, but as strategic infrastructure—supporting prevention, workforce education, and public engagement.

## Fiscal Stewardship and Sustainability

In 2025, IRSJA demonstrated strong fiscal stewardship across programs and convenings, including the successful execution of large-scale events with transparent budgeting and responsible resource management. The organization also advanced a clear revenue diversification and sustainability strategy, positioning curriculum licensing, workforce training, certifications, convenings, and media as complementary pathways to long-term stability.

This approach reflects IRSJA's evolution from grant-dependent programming toward a durable, blended funding model aligned with workforce systems, public contracts, and earned revenue.

## Positioned for the Future

By the close of 2025, IRSJA had moved decisively from delivering impactful programs to building the infrastructure required for scale. With a growing curriculum portfolio, higher education partnerships, workforce certifications, national convening power, and demonstrated systems impact, IRSJA enters 2026 prepared to deepen its role as a national hub for healing-centered workforce development and community safety innovation.

This Annual Impact Report documents a year defined not only by what IRSJA accomplished, but by what it made possible.





# II. ABOUT IRSJA

IRSJA

THE INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH  
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

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ORDER OF Youth Practioners\$100,000.00

one hundred thousand dollarsDOLLARS

FOR

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## Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing healing-centered justice, community safety, and systems change through research, education, workforce development, and narrative transformation. IRSJA exists to ensure that the people most impacted by violence, trauma, and systemic inequity are not only served by solutions, but are positioned to lead, design, and sustain them.

At its core, IRSJA operates at the intersection of public safety, public health, education, and workforce development, translating lived experience and community wisdom into structured programs, policy-relevant research, and credentialed leadership pathways. The organization's work is grounded in the belief that sustainable safety is built through healing, opportunity, and collective accountability.

IRSJA's vision is a future in which communities historically excluded from power are recognized as essential architects of safety, health, and justice—and are resourced accordingly.

## IRSJA's Role in the Community Violence Intervention Ecosystem

IRSJA functions as both an implementation partner and a backbone organization within the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) and healing justice ecosystems. Rather than operating solely as a direct service provider, IRSJA supports communities and institutions by building infrastructure that strengthens the entire field.



## This role includes:

- ➔ Designing and delivering evidence-informed training and certification programs
- ➔ Supporting organizational stabilization and capacity building
- ➔ Developing curriculum and intellectual property that professionalizes frontline work
- ➔ Convening practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and system leaders
- ➔ Bridging community-based practice with higher education, workforce systems, and public agencies

Through this approach, IRSJA helps transform CVI and healing-centered work from informal, under-resourced efforts into recognized, resourced, and sustainable workforce pathways.

## Healing-Centered Leadership & Systems Change Framework

IRSJA's work is guided by a healing-centered framework that recognizes trauma as both an individual and systemic experience. Rather than focusing solely on crisis response, IRSJA prioritizes prevention, restoration, and leadership development, ensuring that communities are equipped not only to interrupt harm, but to build long-term stability.

Key elements of IRSJA's framework include:

- ➔ **Healing as Infrastructure:** Trauma-informed care is embedded across all programs, not siloed as a standalone service.
- ➔ **Leadership Development:** Community members are trained as practitioners, facilitators, researchers, and system navigators.
- ➔ **Workforce Alignment:** Programs are intentionally designed to translate community expertise into professional credentials and employment pathways.

- ➔ **Research & Narrative Change:** Data, storytelling, and media are used to influence policy, funding, and public perception.
- ➔ **Collaboration Over Competition:** IRSJA advances collective impact through partnerships with cities, states, universities, nonprofits, and national networks.

This integrated framework allows IRSJA to respond to immediate community needs while simultaneously reshaping the systems that govern safety, health, and opportunity.





# III. 2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) delivered multi-state programming, national convenings, higher-education-aligned training, and systems-level support that strengthened community safety, workforce readiness, and healing-centered leadership across the country. This section provides a high-level snapshot of IRSJA's reach, scale, and outputs during the reporting year. Detailed city-level outcomes and case studies are presented in later sections of this report.

## Geographic Footprint

IRSJA delivered programs, training, technical assistance, and convenings across multiple states and cities, demonstrating a scalable and adaptable national model.

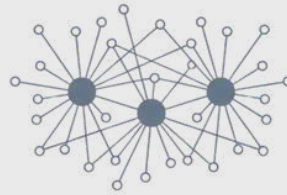
States Served



**4 States Served:** New Jersey, New York, Alabama, and National Initiatives.

**5 Cities Directly Served:** East Orange, Newark, Atlantic City, Birmingham, NYC.

## People Reached & Engaged



**774** Participants at the Pull Up for Peace National Conference.

**330+** Organizations Represented.

**23** States + Washington, D.C. Engaged.

- ➔ Hundreds of practitioners, youth, organizers, educators, and system leaders trained through cohorts, conferences, and community-based programming





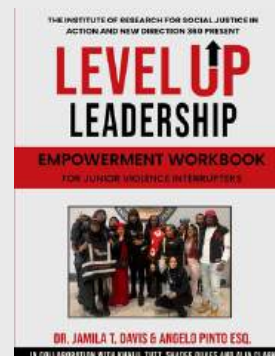
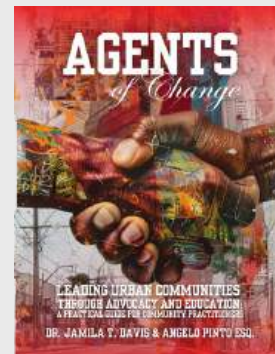
## Programs & Trainings Delivered

- ➔ Three (3) Community Practitioner Program cohorts
  - Two cohorts hosted at Kean University
  - One cohort hosted at Miles College
- ➔ Launch of the Incredible Messenger University (IMU) certification program for Crisis Management System (CMS) workers
- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter programming and curriculum deployment
- ➔ Peer mental health, healing-centered leadership, and civic engagement programs delivered across multiple sites



## Curriculum & Intellectual Property Developed

- ➔ Agents of Change curriculum formalized into a textbook
- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter Program book and training materials created
- ➔ Expanded curriculum portfolio including:
  - We Got Us
  - Healing the Wounded Healer
  - Be the Changemakers
  - I Love Me More
  - Lead Her Healing



Together, these materials support workforce-aligned pathways in violence prevention, mental health, youth leadership, and trauma-informed care.

## National Convenings & Public Engagement

- ➔ Pull Up for Peace National Conference hosted in Atlantic City

- 30+ panels and breakout sessions
- 300+ participants in the National Peace Walk
- Documentary screenings and healing-centered programming

**30+** panels and breakout sessions

**300+** participants in the National Peace Walk

**Documentary screenings and healing-centered programming**

- ➔ Official City Resolution issued by the City of Atlantic City recognizing IRSJA's leadership and impact

## City Partnership Spotlight

In 2025, IRSJA's most comprehensive city-level partnership was implemented in Birmingham, Alabama, where the organization delivered an integrated model combining youth leadership, workforce development, healing-centered programming, and community safety initiatives. This partnership serves as a primary case study demonstrating IRSJA's capacity to operate as a backbone organization, manage public and philanthropic investment, and deliver measurable outcomes at scale. A detailed Birmingham case study is presented in Section VIII: City & Community-Based Partnerships.

## Systems & Organizational Support

- ➔ Technical assistance and stabilization support provided to partner organizations
- ➔ Data organization, documentation, and reporting support connected to state-funded violence prevention initiatives
- ➔ Backbone and capacity-building support for community-based organizations operating within public safety systems



## Media, Storytelling & Narrative Change

- ➔ Documentary filming and media production integrated into program delivery
- ➔ Storytelling used as a strategy for prevention, workforce education, and policy influence
- ➔ National visibility elevated through conferences, screenings, and public dialogue

## Organizational Growth Milestones

- ➔ Strategic transition from program delivery to infrastructure and workforce development
- ➔ Expansion of higher education partnerships
- ➔ Launch of certification pathways
- ➔ Advancement of a diversified sustainability strategy



A group of seven diverse individuals, including men and women of various ethnicities, are gathered behind a wooden podium. The podium features a blue plaque with the Kean University logo and name. The group is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark, textured wall with a large screen and a flag partially visible on the right. The floor is covered with a blue and grey striped carpet.

## IV. PROGRAMMATIC IMPACT OVERVIEW





In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) advanced a comprehensive portfolio of programs designed to strengthen community safety, develop a healing-centered workforce, and influence systems at the local, state, and national levels. Rather than operating isolated initiatives, IRSJA structured its work around interconnected program pillars that respond to the full continuum of violence prevention, healing, leadership development, and systems change.

This integrated approach allowed IRSJA to meet immediate community needs while building long-term infrastructure that supports sustainability, workforce readiness, and replication.

## Program Pillars

IRSJA's 2025 programming was organized across five core pillars:

### 1. Community Violence Intervention & Public Safety

IRSJA supported and strengthened Community Violence Intervention (CVI) efforts by centering credible messengers, frontline practitioners, and community leaders as essential actors in public safety. Programs under this pillar focused on violence interruption, crisis response, and community-based prevention strategies that prioritize healing and accountability.

Key efforts included:

- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter programming and curriculum development
- ➔ Training and support for credible messengers and violence prevention practitioners
- ➔ National convening and field-building through Pull Up for Peace

This pillar reinforces IRSJA's commitment to safety strategies rooted in lived experience, relationship-building, and community trust.

## 2. Workforce Development & Credentialing

In 2025, IRSJA made a deliberate shift toward workforce-aligned programming, laying the foundation for certification, credentialing, and employment pathways within community safety and healing professions.

Key efforts included:

- ➔ Delivery of Community Practitioner Program cohorts aligned with higher education
- ➔ Development of standardized textbooks and training materials
- ➔ Launch of Incredible Messenger University (IMU) certification for CMS workers
- ➔ Early alignment with workforce systems and IETPL readiness

This pillar positions IRSJA as a bridge between community expertise and formal workforce systems.



## 3. Youth Leadership & Violence Prevention

IRSJA invested in youth leadership as a core prevention strategy, recognizing young people as critical agents of change within their schools, families, and communities.

Key efforts included:

- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter programming
- ➔ Youth leadership development and civic engagement initiatives
- ➔ Integration of mentorship, peer leadership, and restorative practices

These programs emphasize early intervention, leadership identity, and pathways to education and employment.



## 4. Survivor-Centered Healing & Women's Initiatives

IRSJA advanced survivor-centered, gender-responsive programming that supports healing, leadership, and economic stability for women impacted by violence and trauma.

Key efforts included:

- ➔ I Love Me More healing and empowerment programming
- ➔ Lead Her Healing peer-led trauma-informed initiatives
- ➔ Integration of healing work with workforce and leadership pathways

This pillar affirms healing as both a personal process and a professional competency.

## 5. Research, Media & Narrative Change

IRSJA leveraged research, storytelling, and media to shift public narratives around violence, safety, and leadership. Film, data, and community storytelling were used to elevate lived experience, inform policy conversations, and strengthen public understanding of healing-centered approaches.

Key efforts included:

- ➔ Documentary production and filming connected to Set Her Free
- ➔ Media integration within program delivery and convenings
- ➔ Use of storytelling as a tool for prevention, education, and advocacy

This pillar ensures that community voices are not only heard, but influence systems and decision-making.

## An Integrated Model

Across all pillars, IRSJA emphasized:

- ➔ Healing-centered design
- ➔ Leadership development
- ➔ Workforce relevance
- ➔ Cross-sector collaboration
- ➔ Sustainability and scale

By organizing its work through these pillars, IRSJA created a cohesive model that connects frontline impact to systems change—ensuring that programs reinforce one another and contribute to long-term outcomes.





# V. EDUCATION, TRAINING & CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT





Education and training were central to the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) strategy in 2025. Throughout the year, IRSJA focused on transforming community knowledge and lived experience into structured, teachable, and workforce-relevant curricula that could be delivered consistently across institutions, geographies, and systems.

This work marked a significant organizational shift from informal training toward standardized education models aligned with higher education, certification pathways, and workforce development.

### **Community Practitioner Program**

In 2025, IRSJA delivered three cohorts of its Community Practitioner Program, a flagship training designed to equip community leaders, credible messengers, and frontline practitioners with the skills, ethics, and frameworks needed to operate effectively within public safety, healing, and community systems.

#### **Cohorts Delivered**

- ➔ Two cohorts hosted in partnership with Kean University
- ➔ One cohort hosted at Miles College

These partnerships strengthened IRSJA's alignment with higher education institutions and demonstrated the program's adaptability across regional and institutional contexts.

#### **The Community Practitioner Program emphasized:**

- ➔ Healing-centered leadership
- ➔ Ethical community engagement
- ➔ Violence prevention and de-escalation



- ➔ Systems navigation and accountability
- ➔ Practitioner wellness and sustainability

Participants completed structured coursework, reflective practice, and applied learning, reinforcing the program's relevance to both community-based work and professional settings.

## Agents of Change: From Curriculum to Textbook

A major milestone in 2025 was the formalization of Agents of Change into a textbook, marking IRSJA's transition from curriculum delivery to curriculum ownership and standardization.

The Agents of Change textbook:

- ➔ Codifies IRSJA's core philosophy, frameworks, and practices
- ➔ Translates lived experience into academic and workforce-ready language
- ➔ Supports consistent instruction across facilitators and institutions
- ➔ Serves as a foundational text for practitioner training and certification

This development positioned IRSJA to expand its educational footprint while protecting intellectual property and ensuring quality control across future cohorts.



## Curriculum Portfolio Development

In addition to Agents of Change, IRSJA expanded and refined a comprehensive curriculum portfolio designed to address the full continuum of prevention, healing, and leadership development. These curricula were developed with an emphasis on stackability, allowing participants to build competencies across multiple pathways.

Key curricula developed or advanced in 2025 include:

- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter Program – youth-focused prevention and leadership training
- ➔ We Got Us – peer-to-peer mental health and emotional support
- ➔ Healing the Wounded Healer – trauma-informed care and practitioner wellness

- ➔ Be the Changemakers – civic engagement and leadership development
- ➔ I Love Me More – survivor-centered healing and empowerment
- ➔ Lead Her Healing – peer-led healing and workforce readiness for women

Together, these materials support education and training across youth, adult, and professional audiences.

## Workforce Readiness & Credential Foundations

IRSJA intentionally designed its 2025 education and training work to align with workforce systems and credentialing requirements. This included:

- ➔ Standardizing learning objectives and outcomes
- ➔ Defining facilitator and practitioner competencies
- ➔ Structuring curricula for certificate and certification pathways
- ➔ Preparing programs for future alignment with workforce funding and IETPL requirements



These efforts laid the groundwork for IRSJA's transition into a healing-centered workforce development organization, capable of supporting employment pathways in community safety, mental health, and violence prevention.

## Positioning for Scale

By the end of 2025, IRSJA had moved beyond ad hoc training toward a cohesive education and curriculum ecosystem. With higher education partnerships, textbooks, standardized curricula, and early certification models in place, IRSJA entered 2026 positioned to expand training reach while maintaining fidelity, quality, and impact.





# VI. WORKFORCE & SYSTEMS INNOVATION



In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) made a strategic transition from program delivery to workforce and systems innovation, positioning its work within formal employment, certification, and institutional pathways. This shift reflects IRSJA's commitment to ensuring that healing-centered community safety work is not only impactful, but recognized, resourced, and sustainable within public systems.

Rather than creating parallel structures, IRSJA focused on bridging community-based expertise with workforce systems, higher education, and government infrastructure.

## Launch of Incredible Messenger University (IMU)

A major milestone in 2025 was the launch of Incredible Messenger University (IMU), IRSJA's first formal certification initiative designed to professionalize and credential frontline community safety workers.

IMU was developed to:

- ➔ Translate lived experience into recognized professional competencies
- ➔ Establish shared standards, ethics, and language across practitioners
- ➔ Support career pathways within Community Violence Intervention and Crisis Management Systems

The inaugural IMU certification program was designed specifically for Crisis Management System (CMS) workers, aligning community-based practice with public safety and public health frameworks.

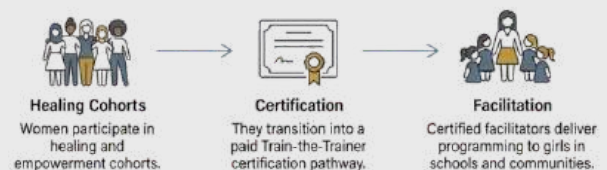
## Certification & Credentialing Foundations

Through IMU and its broader curriculum portfolio, IRSJA began formalizing certification pathways that support workforce entry, advancement, and sustainability.

Key components of this work included:

- ➔ Defining practitioner competencies and learning outcomes
- ➔ Establishing curriculum standards and instructional requirements
- ➔ Designing certification models that align with workforce expectations
- ➔ Laying the groundwork for train-the-trainer and facilitator authorization

These efforts move IRSJA's programs beyond informal training into credential-ready workforce pathways.



## Alignment with Higher Education & Public Systems

IRSJA's workforce innovation strategy is grounded in strong alignment with higher education institutions and public systems. In 2025, this alignment was reinforced through:

- ➔ Delivery of practitioner cohorts at colleges and universities
- ➔ Collaboration with institutional partners on curriculum design
- ➔ Integration of workforce language, evaluation, and accountability into program models

By embedding training within academic and systems contexts, IRSJA ensures that participants are prepared to navigate institutional environments while maintaining community-rooted values.

## Pathway to Workforce Funding & IETPL Readiness

IRSJA's workforce and systems innovation in 2025 laid the foundation for engagement with formal workforce funding streams, including:

- ➔ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) pathways
- ➔ State and local workforce development boards
- ➔ Reentry and violence prevention workforce initiatives
- ➔ Eligible Training Provider List (IETPL) alignment



Through curriculum standardization, outcome definition, and certification development, IRSJA positioned its programs to meet the structural requirements necessary for workforce system participation.

## From Community Work to Professional Pathways

IRSJA's approach to workforce innovation is rooted in a core principle: community expertise is professional expertise. By building bridges between lived experience and institutional systems, IRSJA creates pathways for community members to:

- ➔ Access sustainable employment
- ➔ Advance into leadership roles
- ➔ Influence public safety and healing systems from within

This work ensures that those most impacted by violence and trauma are not only participants in programs, but recognized professionals shaping the future of community safety.

**WELCOME TO  
ATLANTIC CITY**

**MAYOR MARTY SMALL SR.  
MAYOR OF ATLANTIC CITY, NJ**

## **VII. NATIONAL CONVENINGS & FIELD BUILDING**





In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) deepened its role as a national field builder by creating spaces where frontline practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders could come together to heal, collaborate, and shape the future of community safety. Through large-scale convenings and strategic partnerships, IRSJA advanced a shared national vision rooted in healing-centered justice and collective action.

## **Pull Up for Peace National Conference**

The cornerstone of IRSJA's field-building work in 2025 was the Pull Up for Peace National Conference, hosted in Atlantic City. Over four days, the conference brought together credible messengers, violence prevention practitioners, trauma healers, researchers, and system leaders from across the country.

### Conference Highlights

- ➔ 774 total participants
- ➔ 330+ organizations represented
- ➔ 23 states + Washington, D.C.
- ➔ 30+ panels and breakout sessions
- ➔ 300+ participants in the National Peace Walk
- ➔ Documentary screenings and healing-centered programming

Pull Up for Peace positioned Atlantic City as a national hub for community violence intervention and healing justice, fostering cross-city collaboration and shared learning among practitioners who are often isolated in their local contexts.

## A Healing-Centered Convening Model

Unlike traditional conferences, Pull Up for Peace was intentionally designed as a healing-centered convening, recognizing the emotional and physical toll carried by frontline workers. Programming integrated:

- ➔ Trauma-informed facilitation
- ➔ Wellness and restoration spaces
- ➔ Peer-led dialogue and reflection
- ➔ Opportunities for relationship-building and collective strategy

Post-conference feedback reflected the impact of this approach, with participants reporting increased motivation, renewed commitment, and strengthened professional networks.

## Field Building & Cross-City Collaboration

Beyond individual learning, Pull Up for Peace functioned as a national collaboration incubator. As a result of the convening:

- ➔ 85% of participants reported forming new partnerships
- ➔ 12+ cross-city initiatives were launched following the conference

These collaborations extended IRSJA's impact beyond the event itself, contributing to ongoing coordination, knowledge-sharing, and collective problem-solving across jurisdictions.



## Municipal Recognition & Civic Impact

In recognition of the conference's national significance and its positive impact on the city, IRSJA received an official resolution from the City of Atlantic City, affirming the organization's leadership in advancing healing-centered public safety and community engagement.

This municipal recognition reflects IRSJA's growing credibility with public institutions and reinforces its capacity to host large-scale convenings that deliver both civic and field-wide value.

## National Leadership & Ecosystem Building

Through Pull Up for Peace and related convenings, IRSJA strengthened its position as:





## National Leadership & Ecosystem Building

Through Pull Up for Peace and related convenings, IRSJA strengthened its position as:

- ➔ A trusted convener of the national CVI and healing justice field
- ➔ A bridge between community-based practitioners and institutional systems
- ➔ A leader in redefining safety through healing, collaboration, and workforce development

These convenings complement IRSJA's education, workforce, and systems initiatives, ensuring that field leadership is not centralized in a single geography but shared across communities.

## Looking Ahead

Building on the success of the 2025 convening, IRSJA plans to expand its national convening strategy in 2026, including regional pre-summits and deeper integration of research, policy, and workforce development into future gatherings.

Through this work, IRSJA continues to invest in the relationships, infrastructure, and shared vision necessary to sustain a national movement for healing-centered community safety.



A group of approximately 15 diverse young people are posed on a wide, ornate staircase in a grand, historic building. The group is arranged in several rows, with some standing on the upper steps and others sitting or standing on the lower steps. They are dressed in a variety of styles, from casual streetwear to more formal attire. The background features high ceilings, large windows, and classical architectural details like columns and decorative railings. The overall atmosphere is one of community and achievement.

# VIII. CITY & COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) deepened its role as a trusted partner to cities, community-based organizations, and public systems by delivering place-based programming, technical assistance, workforce training, and infrastructure support. IRSJA's city partnerships reflect a model that is both community-rooted and systems-aligned, allowing local impact to inform national strategy while maintaining consistent standards for quality, accountability, and healing-centered practice.

Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, IRSJA adapted its frameworks to meet the specific needs, assets, and conditions of each city—supporting local implementation while contributing to field-wide learning and replication.

### City Partnership Spotlight: Birmingham, Alabama

In 2025, IRSJA implemented its most comprehensive city-level partnership in Birmingham, serving as a backbone organization supporting youth leadership, workforce development, community safety, and healing-centered programming. Birmingham functioned as a full-scale demonstration of IRSJA's integrated model, combining direct service, organizational stabilization, data-driven evaluation, and public-private collaboration.

#### Scope of Engagement

- ➔ Engaged 2,000+ residents through community safety, healing, and leadership initiatives
- ➔ Served 50 youth through leadership development, earn-and-learn opportunities, and violence prevention programming
- ➔ Trained 20+ community practitioners supporting frontline violence prevention, healing, and systems navigation

  
**2,000+**  
residents engaged through community safety and healing initiatives.

  
**50**  
youth served through leadership development and earn-and-learn programming.

  
**20+**  
community practitioners trained to support frontline violence prevention.

  
**\$120,000**  
in direct community investment (stipends & programming),  
**\$100,000**  
in philanthropic investment secured to sustain impact.

#### Workforce & Economic Impact

- ➔ \$120,000 in direct community investment through stipends, programming, and local support
- ➔ \$350,000+ in in-kind contributions supporting program delivery and infrastructure
- ➔ \$100,000 philanthropic investment supporting sustained impact

#### Systems Alignment & Learning

Birmingham served as a learning laboratory for IRSJA's national strategy, informing curriculum refinements, certification models, workforce alignment, and data systems used across other cities.





## Atlantic City, New Jersey: Capacity Building, Workforce Training & Field Leadership

In Atlantic City, IRSJA played a multi-faceted role in strengthening the city's community violence intervention ecosystem through direct programming, workforce training, capacity building, and national convening.

### Local Capacity Building & Training

IRSJA partnered with the city's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) organization to:

- ➔ Provide capacity-building support strengthening internal systems, leadership development, and program structure
- ➔ Deliver training and professional development for frontline violence intervention workers
- ➔ Integrate healing-centered and trauma-informed practices into local CVI operations

### Frontline Workforce Convening

In collaboration with local partners, IRSJA co-produced the first-ever Community Development & Intervention (CDI) Conference for Frontline Workers in Atlantic City. This convening centered the professional needs, wellness, and leadership of practitioners working directly in violence prevention, crisis response, and community safety roles.

The CDI Conference:

- ➔ Created a dedicated space for training, healing, and peer support
- ➔ Elevated workforce development as a core violence prevention strategy
- ➔ Reinforced Atlantic City's commitment to investing in frontline practitioners

### National Convening & Civic Impact

Atlantic City also hosted the Pull Up for Peace National Conference, bringing national visibility, economic activity, and cross-city collaboration to the region.

### Municipal Recognition: City of Atlantic City Resolution

In recognition of IRSJA's leadership and impact, the City of Atlantic City issued Resolution No. 512, formally acknowledging the success of the Pull Up for Peace Conference and IRSJA's contribution to violence prevention, frontline healing, and community safety.

Adopted on July 16, 2025, the resolution recognized Pull Up for Peace as a national, solution-driven convening that honored frontline workers and advanced a shared vision for safer, healthier communities. The City Council cited the conference's integration of panels, workshops, healing spaces, youth showcases, film screenings, and its emphasis on S.A.V.E. (Stand Against Violence Everywhere) as a framework for community care.



### Atlantic City, NJ

- **Role:** Capacity Builder & National Convener.
- **Activities:** Strengthened local CVI organization, delivered professional development for frontline workers, hosted the national Pull Up for Peace conference.
- **Recognition:** Received City Resolution No. 512 for advancing public safety.

The resolution further acknowledged IRSJA's partnership with Atlantic City O.N.E. Neighborhood Evolution and its role in:

- ➔ Showcasing and empowering frontline violence prevention workers
- ➔ Providing training, self-care, and professional development
- ➔ Elevating evidence-based violence prevention models
- ➔ Advancing dialogue around sustainable funding for community safety work

This formal municipal recognition reflects IRSJA's growing credibility as a trusted partner to cities and affirms its readiness for deeper public-sector collaboration.



## New Jersey: East Orange & Newark

Across East Orange and Newark, IRSJA supported violence prevention and community safety efforts through training, curriculum deployment, and organizational stabilization.

- ➔ East Orange: IRSJA partnered with community-based organizations to support violence prevention programming, data organization, documentation, and reporting connected to state-funded initiatives.
- ➔ Newark: IRSJA delivered practitioner training, curriculum support, and leadership development aligned with healing-centered community safety approaches.

These efforts strengthened local capacity while aligning practice with broader state and systems frameworks.

### East Orange & Newark, NJ

- **Role:** Program Stabilizer & Training Partner.
- **Activities:** Provided technical assistance, data organization, and reporting support for state-funded violence prevention efforts.

## New York City

In New York City, IRSJA advanced workforce-aligned training, curriculum development, and systems engagement focused on credible messengers, community practitioners, and public safety professionals—further strengthening alignment with higher education institutions, city agencies, and community partners.

This model allows IRSJA to scale impact without sacrificing depth—ensuring that local partnerships contribute to both community-level outcomes and national field-building.


### A Replicable City Partnership Model

Across all city partnerships, IRSJA applied a consistent model centered on:

- ➔ Healing-centered program design
- ➔ Workforce and leadership development
- ➔ Organizational stabilization and technical assistance
- ➔ Data-informed decision-making
- ➔ Cross-sector collaboration

### New York City, NY

- **Role:** Workforce Systems Integrator.
- **Activities:** Advanced workforce-aligned training and systems engagement with city agencies and community partners.



# IX. YOUTH LEADERSHIP & VIOLENCE PREVENTION



In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) advanced youth leadership as a core violence prevention strategy. IRSJA's youth-centered work recognizes young people not only as participants in programs, but as leaders, peer influencers, and future professionals within community safety and healing ecosystems.

By integrating leadership development, prevention education, and early workforce exposure, IRSJA created pathways that support youth well-being while strengthening long-term community stability.

## Junior Violence Interrupter Program

The Junior Violence Interrupter Program served as IRSJA's primary youth violence prevention initiative in 2025. Designed to equip young people with the skills, confidence, and support needed to interrupt conflict and promote safety, the program emphasizes accountability, peer leadership, and restorative practices.

Core components of the program include:

- ➔ Conflict de-escalation and mediation skills
- ➔ Peer leadership and responsibility-building
- ➔ Emotional awareness and communication
- ➔ Exposure to community safety and prevention careers
- ➔ Healing-centered approaches that acknowledge trauma without criminalization



Equips young people with skills in conflict de-escalation, peer leadership, and restorative practices.



Emphasizes healing-centered approaches that acknowledge trauma without criminalization.

Youth participants were supported to become positive influencers within their schools and communities, helping to shift norms around conflict and violence.

## Youth Leadership Development & Civic Engagement

Beyond direct violence interruption, IRSJA invested in broader youth leadership development as a prevention strategy. Programming encouraged young people to:

- ➔ Understand their role in shaping community safety
- ➔ Develop leadership identity and self-efficacy
- ➔ Engage in civic dialogue and collective problem-solving
- ➔ Build skills that translate into education and employment pathways

Through mentorship and structured learning environments, youth were supported to see themselves as contributors to community solutions rather than subjects of intervention.

## Early Workforce Exposure & Career Pathways

IRSJA intentionally positioned youth programming as an early entry point into workforce pathways related to violence prevention, mental health, public health, and community leadership.

Key workforce-aligned elements included:

- ➔ Introduction to roles such as violence interrupters, peer advocates, community practitioners, and healers
- ➔ Exposure to training and certification pathways available through IRSJA's adult programs
- ➔ Opportunities to build transferable skills including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making

This approach supports a long-term pipeline in which youth can transition into formal training, certification, and employment as they mature.

## Prevention Through Healing & Belonging

IRSJA's youth work is grounded in the belief that prevention begins with connection, care, and belonging. Programs prioritized:

- ➔ Safe spaces for expression and reflection
- ➔ Trauma-informed facilitation
- ➔ Relationship-building between youth and trusted adults
- ➔ Affirmation of youth voice and lived experience

By centering healing alongside leadership, IRSJA addressed root causes of violence rather than relying on punitive responses.

## Impact & Organizational Learning

Youth leadership initiatives informed IRSJA's broader strategy by highlighting:

- ➔ The importance of early intervention
- ➔ The value of peer-led prevention models

- ➔ The need for seamless pathways from youth programs to adult workforce training

Insights from youth programming contributed to curriculum development, workforce planning, and the refinement of IRSJA's violence prevention framework.

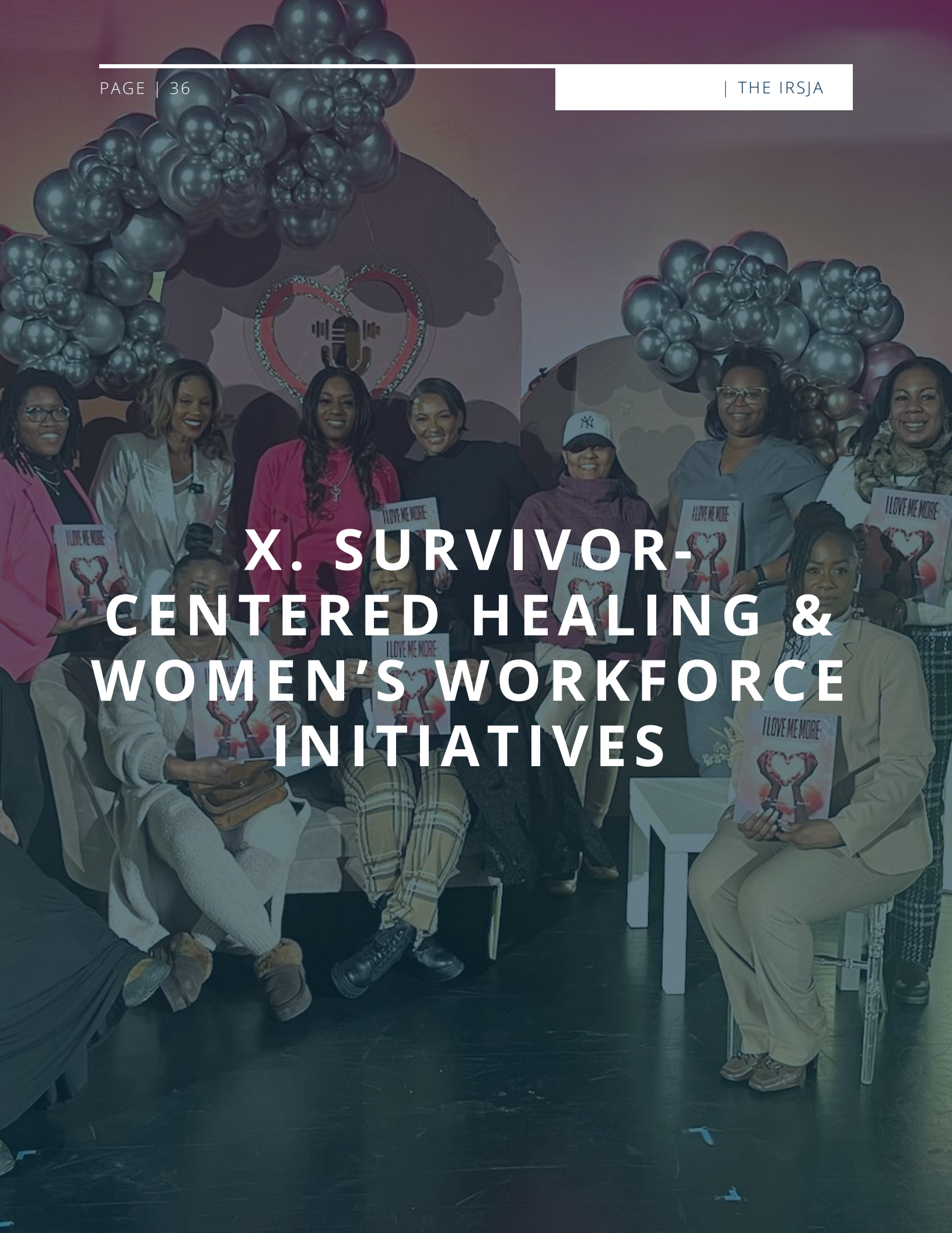
## Looking Ahead

Building on its 2025 youth work, IRSJA plans to further strengthen youth-to-workforce pipelines by:

- ➔ Expanding Junior Violence Interrupter programming
- ➔ Formalizing youth leadership credentials
- ➔ Deepening alignment with workforce and education systems

Through these efforts, IRSJA continues to invest in young people as essential leaders in building safer, healthier communities.





# X. SURVIVOR- CENTERED HEALING & WOMEN'S WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) expanded its survivor-centered work by formalizing healing-based programs into structured workforce pathways for women. These initiatives are rooted in the understanding that community safety cannot be achieved without addressing violence that occurs in private spaces, particularly domestic and intimate partner violence, which often remains under-resourced and under-addressed even as other forms of violence decline.

Across multiple communities IRSJA serves, including Essex County and Birmingham, partners and practitioners have identified persistent or rising domestic violence concerns, underscoring the need for survivor-centered interventions that combine healing, economic stability, and leadership development.

## **Domestic Violence & Community Safety Context**

While many communities have reported progress in reducing gun violence and street-level harm, domestic and intimate partner violence have not followed the same downward trajectory. In New Jersey, reported domestic violence incidents increased in 2023, with more than 70,000 incidents statewide, alongside an increase in domestic-violence-related homicides . Data and community reporting in Essex County reflect continued prevalence consistent with statewide patterns, reinforcing concerns raised by local service providers and violence prevention partners .

Nationally, intimate partner violence affects millions each year, with significant emotional, physical, and economic consequences, and is widely understood to be underreported compared to other forms of violence .



In cities such as Birmingham, where attention and resources are often concentrated on gun violence and homicide reduction, survivors and advocates continue to identify domestic violence as a persistent and less visible threat to safety and stability.

IRSJA's survivor-centered initiatives respond directly to this gap, recognizing that healing and economic empowerment for women are essential components of long-term violence prevention.

## **I Love Me More: Women's & Girls Empowerment and Workforce Development**

In 2025, IRSJA advanced the I Love Me More Women's & Girls Empowerment and Workforce Development Initiative, launching the program in Birmingham as a trauma-informed, intergenerational healing-to-workforce pipeline for women and girls.





The initiative is structured to:

- ➔ Provide adult women's healing and empowerment cohorts focused on trauma recovery, identity restoration, boundary-setting, and leadership readiness

Transition participants into a Train-the-Trainer

- ➔ certification pathway, preparing women to become paid facilitators
- ➔ Deploy certified facilitators to deliver empowerment programming to girls across schools, courts, and community-based settings
- ➔ Create a sustainable model in which survivor-led healing becomes recognized, compensated work

By centering women's lived experience as a professional asset, I Love Me More strengthens family stability, youth outcomes, and community safety simultaneously.

### **Her Path Forward: Survivor-Centered Workforce Pathway**

In 2025, IRSJA also launched Her Path Forward, a survivor-centered workforce initiative designed to support women impacted by trauma, system involvement, and economic instability as they transition into healing-informed employment pathways.

#### **Her Path Forward emphasizes:**

- ➔ Trauma-informed stabilization and healing
- ➔ Workforce readiness and professional identity development

- ➔ Leadership pathways into facilitation, peer support, and community-based roles
- ➔ Alignment with violence prevention, public health, and workforce systems

The program was initiated in Alabama in response to community-identified needs and is positioned for expansion into Essex County, New Jersey in 2026, where IRSJA maintains strong partnerships in violence prevention, higher education, and workforce development.

## Workforce Alignment & Systems Impact

Together, I Love Me More and Her Path Forward demonstrate IRSJA's ability to:

- ➔ Translate survivor-centered healing into workforce-ready programming
- ➔ Certify women to deliver prevention, healing, and empowerment services
- ➔ Create paid leadership pathways rooted in lived experience
- ➔ Address domestic violence as a public safety and workforce issue, not solely a social service concern

These initiatives align with IRSJA's broader strategy to secure workforce accreditation and funding pathways, including engagement with public workforce systems and eligible training frameworks.



## Looking Ahead

Building on its 2025 launches, IRSJA plans to:

- ➔ Expand survivor-centered workforce initiatives into New Jersey in 2026
- ➔ Deepen partnerships in Essex County and Birmingham
- ➔ Strengthen evaluation and credentialing infrastructure
- ➔ Integrate domestic violence prevention more fully into community safety and workforce ecosystems

Through this work, IRSJA affirms that ending violence requires investing in survivors—not only as recipients of services, but as leaders, professionals, and architects of safer communities.



A photograph of three people standing on a city street, holding a large ceremonial check. On the left is a man in a light grey suit and tie, wearing white sneakers with yellow socks. In the center is a woman in a black dress, smiling. On the right is a man in a black t-shirt, black pants, and a black cap, wearing grey sneakers. They are holding a large check that reads "New Direction" and "One hundred thousand dollars". The check also mentions "Coalition to Advance Public Safety (CAPS) Award" and lists logos for CAPS, CJR, and CITIES UNITED. The background shows a busy city street with other people and buildings.

# XI. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, CERTIFICATION & CREDENTIALING PATHWAYS





In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) advanced a deliberate transition from programmatic training to formal workforce development infrastructure. Building on years of curriculum delivery, community partnerships, and higher education collaboration, IRSJA focused on translating lived experience, healing-centered practice, and community leadership into recognized credentials, certifications, and career pathways.

This work reflects IRSJA's long-term strategy to align community-based expertise with public workforce systems—ensuring that those doing the work of prevention, healing, and safety can access sustainable employment, advancement, and institutional recognition.

## From Training to Workforce Pathways

Historically, community violence prevention, peer support, and survivor-led healing work have relied on short-term funding, informal training, and limited career mobility. In 2025, IRSJA took concrete steps to change that reality by:

- ➔ Standardizing curricula with defined learning objectives and outcomes
- ➔ Clarifying practitioner competencies and ethical standards
- ➔ Structuring programs into stackable pathways
- ➔ Designing models suitable for certification and credentialing

This shift allows IRSJA programs to move beyond participation-based training toward employment-aligned education.



## Core Workforce Pathways

IRSJA's workforce development strategy is anchored in a set of interconnected pathways that span prevention, healing, leadership, and systems engagement.

### Community Practitioner Pathway

- ➔ Grounded in the Agents of Change textbook and curriculum
- ➔ Delivered through higher education partnerships
- ➔ Prepares practitioners for roles in community safety, organizing, and systems navigation

### Incredible Messenger University (IMU)

- ➔ Certification pathway for credible messengers and Crisis Management System (CMS) workers
- ➔ Establishes shared standards, ethics, and professional identity
- ➔ Supports career advancement within public safety and violence prevention systems

### Mental Health & Peer Support Pathways

- ➔ We Got Us peer-to-peer mental health framework
- ➔ Emphasizes emotional literacy, peer support, and referral readiness
- ➔ Aligns with community-based mental health and prevention roles



### Youth-to-Workforce Pipeline

- ➔ Junior Violence Interrupter programming as early workforce exposure
- ➔ Leadership development and transferable skill-building
- ➔ Clear pathways into adult certification and training programs

### Survivor-Centered Workforce Pathways

- ➔ I Love Me More and Her Path Forward initiatives
- ➔ Train-the-Trainer models and paid facilitation roles
- ➔ Survivor-led prevention and healing as professional work

## Certification, Credentialing & Quality Assurance

In 2025, IRSJA focused on building the internal infrastructure required for certification and credentialing, including:

- ➔ Defined facilitator qualifications and training requirements
- ➔ Assessment tools to measure competency and readiness
- ➔ Documentation standards for participation, completion, and outcomes
- ➔ Fidelity measures to ensure consistent delivery across sites

These elements are essential to IRSJA's readiness for workforce accreditation, institutional partnerships, and public funding.

## Alignment with Workforce Systems & IETPL Readiness

IRSJA's workforce strategy is intentionally aligned with public workforce development systems, including:

- ➔ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) frameworks
- ➔ State and local workforce development boards
- ➔ Reentry, violence prevention, and public health workforce initiatives
- ➔ Preparation for Eligible Training Provider List (IETPL) approval

Through curriculum standardization, outcome definition, and credential design, IRSJA positioned its programs to meet the structural requirements necessary for workforce system participation and investment.

## Equity, Access & Economic Mobility

At the core of IRSJA's workforce development approach is a commitment to equity. Programs are designed to:

- ➔ Remove barriers for justice-impacted individuals and survivors
- ➔ RValue lived experience alongside formal education
- ➔ Provide paid pathways and leadership opportunities
- ➔ Support long-term economic mobility and stability

By aligning healing-centered work with workforce systems, IRSJA ensures that community members are not only serving their communities, but building sustainable careers.





## Looking Ahead

In 2026, IRSJA will continue to advance workforce readiness by:

- ➔ Pursuing formal workforce accreditation and IETPL inclusion
- ➔ Expanding certification offerings across regions
- ➔ Strengthening employer and institutional partnerships
- ➔ Deepening evaluation and labor-market alignment

Through this work, IRSJA is redefining community safety and healing as legitimate, professional fields of practice, supported by credentials, career pathways, and public investment.

A photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a grey jacket over a white t-shirt, speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand, pointing upwards. The podium has several microphones, including one with a '61 NEWS' logo. Behind him, a diverse group of people are standing, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The background appears to be an outdoor setting with a building facade. The image is overlaid with a dark blue tint.

## **XII. OUTCOMES, LEARNING & ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH**



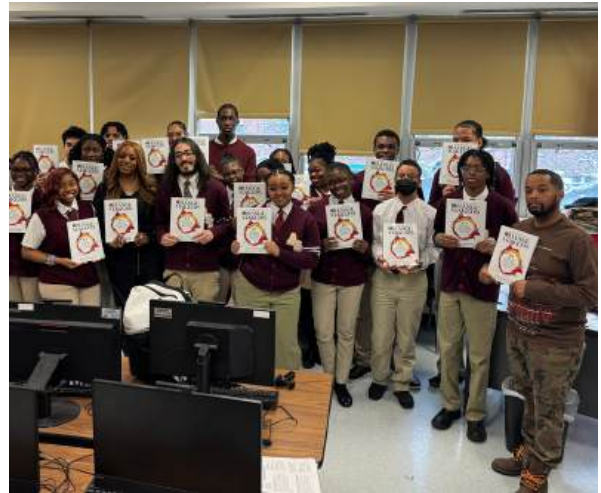
In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) moved through a period of significant learning and maturation. As the organization expanded its geographic footprint, deepened city partnerships, and formalized workforce pathways, IRSJA intentionally reflected on outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned to strengthen future impact.

This section highlights key outcomes across programs and outlines how learning from 2025 informed organizational growth and strategic direction.

## Programmatic Outcomes

Across initiatives, IRSJA achieved the following outcomes in 2025:

- ➔ Expanded access to healing-centered violence prevention, leadership development, and workforce training across multiple states
- ➔ Strengthened practitioner readiness through standardized curricula, higher education partnerships, and certification pathways
- ➔ Increased community engagement and cross-sector collaboration through national convenings and city-based programming
- ➔ Elevated survivor-centered approaches as core components of community safety and workforce development
- ➔ Supported youth leadership and early workforce exposure through prevention-focused programming



While outcomes varied by program and location, IRSJA consistently emphasized quality, fidelity, and responsiveness to community needs.

## City-Level Learning: From Implementation to Infrastructure

IRSJA's city partnerships—particularly its comprehensive work in Birmingham—generated critical learning that shaped national strategy. Key insights included:

- ➔ The value of serving as a backbone organization, not only a program provider
- ➔ The importance of pairing violence prevention with economic opportunity and workforce development
- ➔ The need for strong data systems and documentation to support public funding and accountability
- ➔ The effectiveness of healing-centered approaches in sustaining frontline workers and community leaders

These lessons informed refinements to curriculum design, certification models, and partnership structures across other cities.

## Workforce & Certification Readiness

As IRSJA transitioned from training delivery to workforce infrastructure, the organization learned that:

- ➔ Standardization is essential for scale without sacrificing community integrity
- ➔ Clear competencies and outcomes support alignment with workforce systems
- ➔ Lived experience, when properly supported and credentialed, is a powerful professional asset
- ➔ Certification pathways must be paired with quality assurance and facilitator support

These insights guided IRSJA's continued investment in credentialing, workforce alignment, and IETPL readiness.

## Organizational Capacity & Infrastructure Growth

In 2025, IRSJA strengthened internal systems to support its expanding work, including:

- ➔ Curriculum management and intellectual property protection
- ➔ Program documentation and reporting processes
- ➔ Partnership coordination across cities and institutions
- ➔ Financial stewardship and sustainability planning

This growth enabled IRSJA to manage increased scale while maintaining accountability and mission alignment.





## Challenges & Adaptation

IRSJA also encountered challenges common to organizations operating at the intersection of community work and systems change, including:

- ➔ Balancing rapid growth with staff and facilitator capacity
- ➔ Navigating varied requirements across cities and institutions
- ➔ Responding to evolving community needs amid shifting public safety trends

Rather than viewing these challenges as setbacks, IRSJA used them as opportunities for learning, adaptation, and strategic refinement.

## Positioned for the Future

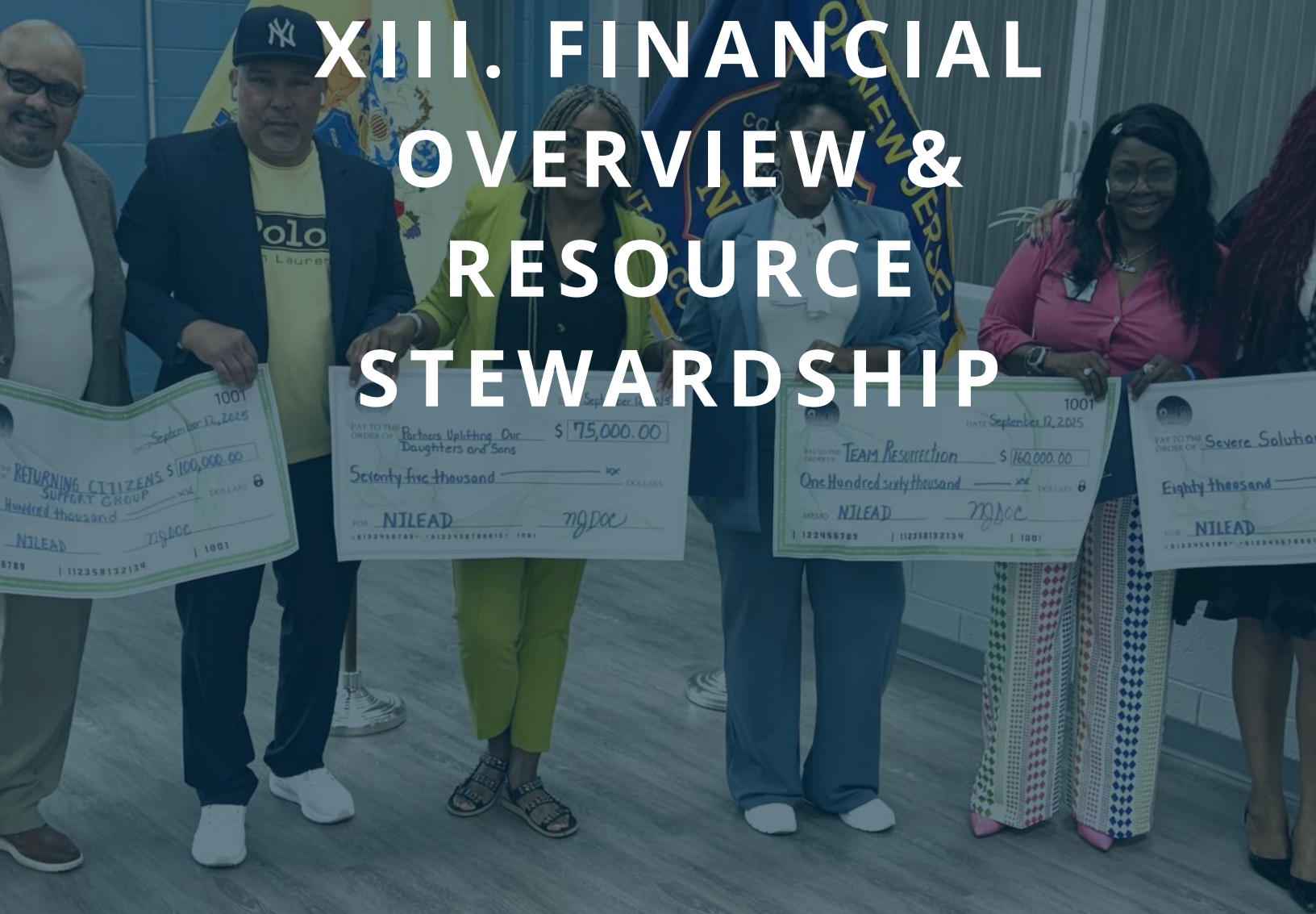
By the end of 2025, IRSJA emerged stronger, more focused, and better equipped to pursue long-term impact. The organization entered 2026 with:

- ➔ Clear program and workforce pathways
- ➔ Deepened institutional and city partnerships
- ➔ A growing body of documented outcomes and learning
- ➔ A strategic vision grounded in healing, workforce development, and systems change



This evolution positions IRSJA to continue building infrastructure that supports safer communities and sustainable careers for those most impacted by violence and inequity.

# XIII. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP





In 2025, the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) managed significant public-sector investments while delivering multi-city programming, national convenings, and workforce-aligned initiatives. A substantial portion of IRSJA's funding was secured through city and federally supported partnerships, reflecting growing trust in IRSJA's capacity to operate within public systems and deliver accountable, results-driven work.

IRSJA approached financial stewardship as a core responsibility—ensuring that public and private resources were managed transparently, aligned with partner requirements, and directly connected to community impact.

## Public-Sector Funding & City Partnerships

A significant share of IRSJA's 2025 funding was generated through municipal and federally supported investments, often in partnership with cities and local agencies focused on violence prevention, workforce development, and community safety.

### These funds supported:

- ➔ City-based violence prevention and healing initiatives
- ➔ Workforce training and certification-aligned programming
- ➔ Capacity building and technical assistance for community-based organizations



- ➔ Data organization, reporting, and compliance tied to public funding streams
- ➔ Large-scale convenings and field-building efforts hosted in partnership with municipalities

IRSJA's ability to steward public dollars across multiple jurisdictions—including Alabama, New Jersey, and New York—demonstrates its readiness to operate within complex government funding environments.

## Additional Revenue Sources

In addition to city and federal funding, IRSJA's 2025 work was supported through:

- ➔ Philanthropic grants aligned with healing-centered and workforce initiatives
- ➔ Institutional partnerships with higher education and community-based organizations

- ➔ Earned and event-based revenue connected to professional development and convenings

This blended funding model strengthened organizational resilience while maintaining mission alignment.

## Program Investment & Resource Allocation

IRSJA strategically allocated resources to balance direct service delivery with long-term infrastructure building, including:

- ➔ Practitioner and facilitator stipends
- ➔ Workforce curriculum development and certification design
- ➔ Youth, adult, and survivor-centered programming
- ➔ National and regional convenings
- ➔ Organizational systems supporting compliance, reporting, and sustainability

Public-sector investments were deployed in accordance with partner expectations, timelines, and accountability standards.

## Fiscal Management & Accountability

Throughout 2025, IRSJA maintained strong financial controls to meet the requirements of city and federally supported funding, including:

- ➔ Program-level budgeting and cost tracking
- ➔ Clear documentation tied to contracts, grants, and deliverables
- ➔ Regular monitoring to ensure alignment with public-sector compliance standards
- ➔ Transparent financial reporting to partners and stakeholders

These practices ensured that IRSJA could scale responsibly while maintaining credibility with government partners.





## Sustainability & Public Funding Readiness

IRSJA's financial strategy reflects a long-term commitment to:

- ➔ Deepening city and state partnerships
- ➔ Expanding workforce-aligned public funding opportunities
- ➔ Positioning curricula and certifications for workforce system investment
- ➔ Supporting multi-year planning and infrastructure growth

By aligning program design with public funding priorities, IRSJA is building a sustainable model that supports both community impact and workforce development.

## Looking Ahead

As IRSJA enters 2026, the organization is well-positioned to:

- ➔ Expand city and federally supported partnerships
- ➔ Secure workforce-aligned contracts and funding streams
- ➔ Strengthen cross-city learning and replication
- ➔ Continue transparent stewardship of public resources

This foundation reinforces IRSJA's role as a trusted partner to cities and public systems, capable of delivering healing-centered, workforce-aligned solutions at scale.



A photograph of three Black women standing in front of a building that has been severely damaged, likely by a natural disaster. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blue dress and has her arms raised in celebration. The woman in the center is wearing a light-colored patterned shirt and pink pants, and is clapping. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue suit and is also clapping. All three women are smiling and appear to be in a joyful mood despite the destruction in the background.

# **XIV. LOOKING AHEAD: READINESS FOR 2026**

As the Institute of Research for Social Justice and Action (IRSJA) enters 2026, the organization does so with a strong foundation, demonstrated results, and a clear strategy for growth. The work accomplished in 2025 marked a pivotal transition—from program implementation to infrastructure building, from training to workforce development, and from localized impact to scalable systems change.

IRSJA is now positioned to deepen its role as a trusted partner to cities, public systems, higher education institutions, and workforce agencies.

## Strategic Priorities for 2026

Building on the momentum of 2025, IRSJA's priorities for 2026 include:

### ➔ Workforce System Integration

Advancing formal alignment with public workforce systems, including pursuit of Eligible Training Provider List (IETPL) approval and expansion of certification pathways.

### ➔ Program Expansion Across States

Scaling proven initiatives—such as Her Path Forward, I Love Me More, Community Practitioner, and IMU—into additional cities and counties, including planned expansion into Essex County, New Jersey.



### ➔ Strengthening Survivor-Centered Workforce Pathways

Expanding paid leadership and facilitation opportunities for women and survivors, positioning healing-centered work as essential public safety and workforce infrastructure.

### ➔ Deepening City & Federal Partnerships

Growing multi-year partnerships with municipalities and federally supported initiatives focused on violence prevention, workforce development, and community safety.

### ➔ Evaluation, Data & Credentialing Infrastructure

Continuing to strengthen outcome tracking, curriculum fidelity, and certification standards to support accountability, replication, and public investment.

## From Lived Experience to Systems Leadership

IRSJA's model is rooted in the belief that those closest to the challenges facing communities must also be closest to the solutions. In 2026, IRSJA will continue to elevate lived experience as a professional asset—supporting pathways where community members become certified practitioners, workforce leaders, and systems partners.

### This approach bridges gaps between:

- ➔ Community-based knowledge and institutional systems
- ➔ Healing and economic opportunity
- ➔ Prevention and long-term public safety outcomes

## Positioned for Sustainable Impact

The organization's evolution over the past year has positioned IRSJA to:

- ➔ Manage public-sector funding responsibly
- ➔ Deliver workforce-aligned programming at scale
- ➔ Support cities navigating complex public safety and healing challenges
- ➔ Contribute to national conversations on violence prevention, survivor leadership, and workforce development

IRSJA enters 2026 with the infrastructure, partnerships, and vision necessary to sustain and expand its impact.

## Closing Reflection

The work of 2025 affirmed that healing-centered, workforce-aligned solutions are not supplemental—they are essential. Through deep partnerships, rigorous learning, and community-rooted leadership, IRSJA is building systems that honor dignity, create opportunity, and support safer communities.

As IRSJA looks ahead, it remains committed to advancing justice not only as a value, but as a practice embedded in education, workforce development, and public systems.