



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Activating Philanthropic and Business Capital: Strategies to Advance Gun Violence Prevention in the US

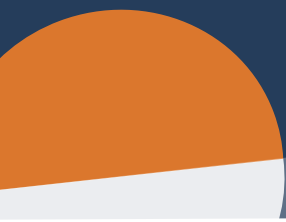
Each year, more than 40,000 people lose their lives from firearms in the US, and nearly twice as many suffer injury.<sup>1</sup> Approximately half of American adults say they have experienced a gun-related incident, and the majority of American adults have taken at least one action to protect themselves or a family member from gun violence.<sup>2</sup> Firearm fatalities have become the leading cause of death for Americans under age 24.<sup>3</sup> In June 2024, driven by the country's rising numbers of injuries and deaths from firearms, the US Surgeon General declared gun violence a public health crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Approximately 40 percent of US households have at least one firearm within the home, so it is imperative to mitigate the impacts of gun violence through a holistic approach that respects responsible gun ownership. In this time of public health crisis, gun violence prevention (GVP) is an urgent priority that requires engaging new stakeholders, building cross-sector partnerships, and galvanizing more funding.

Causes and contributing factors for homicides, intentional injuries, accidental deaths and injuries, and suicides are disparate and complex. Indeed, the root causes of gun violence cannot be disentangled from other pervasive societal issues, such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, and inadequate mental health care. For these reasons, solutions are far from straightforward.

The GVP ecosystem has critical areas of active need that must be addressed to allow meaningful progress on the issue. There are major gaps in research, particularly a dearth of understanding around nonfatal firearms injuries. Data infrastructure at the county, state, and federal levels is inadequate and disconnected. Without clarity on the scope and severity of the problem, there is a risk of stalled progress. Lack of understanding leads to an incomplete and polarized narrative about gun violence and prevention of harm, which hinders widespread behavior change.

The organizations and professions that address gun violence also need support to make sustainable progress on GVP. Developing the infrastructure of community-led, direct-service providers would enable these entities to absorb more sustainable and predictable funding streams. Additionally, the professional development of the frontline workforce—including clinicians, social workers, and community violence intervention (CVI) workers—requires significantly more support to retain staff and prevent burnout.



Steady, ample financial resources are necessary to care for people affected by gun violence and to implement effective programming to prevent further violence.

Both intervention and prevention efforts are necessary to mitigate firearm injuries and reduce deaths. The long-term success of these efforts depends on sustainable funding models. Philanthropic capital is key to unlocking public funding needed to scale promising models. Private-sector engagement can further sustain and strengthen these efforts to build a stable, thriving society.

In partnership with the Joyce Foundation, the authors of this report seek to contribute to the rich library of thought leadership about GVP, covering a range of types of gun violence including homicides, intentional injuries, accidental deaths and injuries, and suicides. The report's express purpose is to compel broader engagement from unlikely audiences, including stakeholders from finance, business, and the larger philanthropic community. The corporate sector has been a particularly untapped yet influential resource to advance GVP. Therefore, this report covers prime opportunities for businesses across industries to engage and join forces for change.

Following extensive original and secondary research—including consultation with more than 100 experts of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, such as gun owners and individuals who have experienced gun violence—this report highlights overarching principles for philanthropists and the private sector to consider as they consider how best to prevent gun violence. The report's two main sections recommend specific investment opportunities for each of these distinct audiences.

## Principles and Recommendations for Philanthropy

Philanthropic capital is primed to address a range of challenges facing GVP. Across the field, there are major gaps in research, inadequate infrastructure among community-level service organizations, and insufficient professional development of relevant workers. Additionally, the variable political landscape makes public funding uncertain. Attempts to mitigate gun violence must also contend with compounding societal issues, including poverty, racism, and insufficient mental health support.

Philanthropists should keep three core principles in mind to maximize their contributions and address the various barriers facing the GVP ecosystem. First, an issue as complex as gun violence requires deep understanding of local contexts. Impact strategies must be adaptable to the unique needs of the communities being served. A universal approach cannot be applied at the national level, even though philanthropists must indeed be thoughtful about how they can best advance change at scale. Second, facilitating collaboration and intentionally including diverse audiences are critical for cultivating and maintaining trust between funders and beneficiaries, and ensuring better coordination and impact. Third, gun violence will not be resolved overnight. Philanthropists need to take a patient, long-term view with flexibility to grantees via multiyear grants and a long-term timeline for outcomes. The following recommendations reflect these guiding principles for philanthropic capital to address key barriers to GVP progress.

# Principles and Recommendations for Philanthropy

## PRINCIPLES

Think Globally,  
Act Locally

Cultivating Trust Is  
Essential

Philanthropy Can  
Take the Long View

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Unlock Public Funding

- Support capacity building and community-level infrastructure
- Fund pilots and innovative interventions
- Offer long-term and flexible (including unrestricted) funding
- Advocate for policy reform across all levels of government

### Incentivize Collaboration to Promote Stability

- Forge cross-sector partnerships and coordinate engagement among GVP service providers
- Include diverse lived experiences (including gun owners) into GVP strategy/ programming
- Strengthen the GVP frontline workforce, include health-care providers, social workers, and direct service staff
- Support intersectional GVP efforts that include upstream structural factors that lead to gun violence

### Build the GVP Evidence Base and Research Infrastructure

- Fund a comprehensive and equity-centered research agenda that provides a fuller picture on the breadth, scale, and impact of gun violence and GVP efforts
- Advance data infrastructure and usability of collected data
- Invest in a multidisciplinary research community

### Address Trauma to Prevent Future Violence

- Advocate for and facilitate the institutionalization of existing support for GVP victims
- Foster the sharing of best practices between domestic violence survivor support and GVP
- Support comprehensive and sustained care systems that address the long-term physical, psychological, and social effects of gun violence

### Change Narratives to Change Behavior

- Support the development of an evidence base for narrative change
- Engage with media and entertainment across diverse audiences to influence societal norms and discourse
- Promote public awareness on gun violence and opportunities for change

# Principles and Recommendations for Business and Finance

Limitations within both the private sector and the GVP ecosystem can be addressed by finance and business. Risk aversion is a primary hesitation for broader corporate engagement on GVP, which has historically resulted in inaction. Additionally, existing internal organizational policies and larger financial structures are not currently well suited to support GVP objectives, nor have they been used to their fullest potential to effect change on this issue. Nevertheless, the private sector is capable of addressing critical challenges facing the GVP field.

Business and finance are well suited to take on distinct challenges facing the field and should do so with three key principles in mind. First, championing progress for GVP is good for business. Beyond the societal benefits, there are direct economic advantages to curbing all aspects of firearm-related harm. Inaction heightens risk and creates unfavorable circumstances for industries, communities, and beyond. Second, internal and external stakeholder alignment further mitigates risk and amplifies impact. CEO activism, employee engagement, and business operations can all be integrated into a thoughtful approach to address gun violence. Third, social innovation invites new opportunities for GVP. Harnessing technology and other unconventional tools can help address entrenched challenges. Leaning into these emerging developments opens new possibilities for progress.

The following recommendations reflect these guiding principles for the business and finance community to act on GVP efforts that address risk trade-offs and leverage core competencies.

# Principles and Recommendations for Business and Finance

## PRINCIPLES

Preventing  
Gun Violence Is  
Good for Business

Stakeholder  
Alignment  
Increases Impact

Social Innovation  
Invites New  
Opportunities  
for GVP

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Act on Industry-Specific Improvements

- Leverage core competencies to address key GVP needs
- Participate in a GVP business council to coordinate strategy, share best practices, and amplify impact

### Build Employment Pipelines for CVI

- Provide direct support and benefits to CVI organizations
- Establish sustainable hiring pathways for CVI workers and participants

### Mobilize Capital to Effect Change

- Leverage divestment, shareholder advocacy, private equity, and/or other financial levers to advance GVP
- Restructure portfolios and institutional investments to mitigate risks to reputation, workplace safety, and legal liability

### Develop Innovative Banking Strategies

- Evaluate and reconsider targeted credit rationing
- Leverage bond issuance for GVP
- Innovate financing for community organizations

### Reconsider the Role of Insurance

- Incentivize industry to evaluate existing insurance mechanisms for GVP
- Pursue deeper exploration of insurance models to advance GVP

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Collectively, the calls to action in this report showcase the need and opportunity for more mainstream engagement from both the philanthropic and private sectors to effect change and ensure firearm safety for all.

# Endnotes

1. Alan R. Weil, *Reducing the Health Harms of Firearm Violence* (Aspen Institute, February 2024), <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/reducing-the-health-harms-of-firearm-injury/>.
2. Shannon Schumacher, Ashley Kirzinger, Marley Presiado, et al., “Americans’ Experiences with Gun-Related Violence, Injuries, and Deaths,” KFF (blog), April 11, 2023, <https://www.kff.org/other/poll-finding/americans-experiences-with-gun-related-violence-injuries-and-deaths/>.
3. Office of the Surgeon General, “Firearm Violence in America,” US Department of Health and Human Services, accessed June 5, 2024, <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/firearm-violence/index.html>.
4. “Firearm Violence in America,” US Department of Health and Human Services.
5. See, for example: “Firearm Violence in America,” US Department of Health and Human Services; Weil, *Reducing the Health Harms of Firearm Violence*.

Download the full report here:

<https://milkeninstitute.org/content-hub/research-and-reports/reports/activating-capital-strategies-advance-gun-violence-prevention-us>