



# FREEDOM WITHIN PROJECT

In Summary – Stakeholder Feedback Survey Report

April 25, 2025

Presented by:



## Table of Contents

Purpose of Stakeholder Engagement .....	3
Methodology Used.....	3
Summary of Survey by Stakeholder Groups .....	3
Past FWP Board Members.....	3
Governmental Agencies & Policy Makers.....	4
Correctional Administration & Staff.....	4
Freedom Within Participants .....	4
Community Member Feedback .....	5
Community-based Organizations & Service Providers Serving Incarcerated Populations .....	5
Co-Facilitator and FWP Past Facilitators.....	5
Notable Key Takeaways.....	6

# Purpose of Stakeholder Engagement

## Gain Understanding and Insight

To help you understand the needs, expectations and interests of people or organizations who are affected by or can influence your plan.

## Increase Engagement

Allow for conversation to go both ways. Information going out, valuable feedback coming in. “Want money, ask for advice. Want advice, ask for money.”

## Challenge Assumptions

Provide alternative perspectives about our assumptions and proposed goals and strategies. Stakeholders may see gaps that we might otherwise miss.

# Methodology Used

An initial planning session was held to identify stakeholders across multiple categories with high, medium, or low interest and influence on Freedom Within Project’s (FWP) impact and sustainability. Questions were then customized accordingly and sent to the stakeholder groups.

The Google Survey platform was used to deliver the questions to each category of stakeholders and collect their responses in a two-month timeframe. Approximately 50% of those surveyed responded, and many were generous in answering the questions to provide insightful and actionable feedback that Freedom Within Project can utilize for strategic planning.

## At a Glance

**30** surveys sent

**9** stakeholder groups

**14** respondents

thoughtful & actionable feedback

# Summary of Survey by Stakeholder Groups

**Note:** Two stakeholder groups, Participant Families and Donors, did not have any respondents at the time of the survey closing and are not included in this report.

## Past FWP Board Members

**Expansion and Leadership Development:** Urgent need to train new facilitators (both people who are incarcerated and those who live outside the prison) to expand reach and sustainability. Greater focus on empowering individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated as leaders and Board members.

**Program Sustainability:** FWP is perceived as over-reliant on a few key individuals; recommendations include hiring administrative support and professional fundraising consultants.

**Communication:** Quarterly email updates and impact storytelling on emerging platforms like Bluesky were encouraged.

**Success Metrics:** Success should be measured by participant growth, facilitator recruitment, post-program outcomes, and broader curriculum deployment across facilities.

## Governmental Agencies & Policy Makers

**Key Metrics:** Recidivism reduction and developing self-aware, help-seeking individuals are critical outcome measures.

**Policy Needs:** Address barriers caused by penalizing laws for felons; expansion to reach more participants is encouraged.

**Challenges in Reintegration:** Stigma, unhealthy social environments post-release, and need for strong support systems were highlighted.

**Opportunities for Advocacy:** Partnerships with legislators and possibly engaging with victim advocacy groups were suggested to advance policy change.

## Correctional Administration & Staff

**Program Benefits:** FWP creates an authentic, healing container rarely seen in correctional settings. The adaptive, individualized approach was highly praised.

**Policy Alignment:** Caution about perceived "over-familiarity," but acknowledged FWP's proactive communication helps mitigate concerns.

**Challenges:** Cultural resistance within CDCR, frequent staff turnover, and administrative barriers threaten program consistency and expansion.

**Program Improvements:** Suggestions included adding modules on victim awareness, grief work, and written affirmations for participants to boost positive reinforcement and emotional healing.

**Staff Collaboration:** Building casual rapport with staff and maintaining transparency are essential for growing acceptance.

## Freedom Within Participants

**Most Impactful Elements:** Shared experiences across diverse backgrounds and conflict resolution skills were transformative.

**Barriers:** Group cohesion (due to participant turnover) was noted; otherwise, no major barriers were noted while incarcerated.

**Skill Use After Release:** Participants report deep, lasting change, using emotional intelligence tools daily for personal and professional success.

**Additional Support Needs:** Desire for ongoing men's groups or emotional support networks post-release.

## Community Member Feedback

**Program Impact:** Participants develop emotional resilience, hope, and genuine transformation, which also positively affects broader communities.

**Expansion Desires:** Calls for broader availability nationwide and more post-release support, including check-ins and group sessions.

**Public Awareness:** Strong encouragement to use social media, podcasts, and grassroots outreach to amplify visibility and support.

**Trauma and Emotional Intelligence:** Acknowledgement that emotional healing is rare and essential, with hopes that Freedom Within programs continue to grow to address systemic trauma beyond incarceration.

## Community-based Organizations & Service Providers Serving Incarcerated Populations

**Complementary Services:** FWP is seen as deeply aligned with other organizations' rehabilitative and introspective missions.

**Collaboration Opportunities:** Pre-release referrals and joint celebratory events are suggested to strengthen partnerships.

**Participant Needs:** Focus on healing, access to safe communities, and sustained support after release.

**Resource Sharing:** Requests for periodic updates and continued strong communication between agencies.

## Co-Facilitator and FWP Past Facilitators

**Effective Curriculum Components:** Crossroads process, mirror exercises, emotional exploration, and creating a safe space were the most praised elements.

**Delivery Challenges:** Institutional mistrust and administrative obstacles were significant challenges.

**Improvements Suggested:** Ongoing adaptation of methods based on participant feedback; continued facilitator development through workshops and constructive feedback.

**Resource Needs:** Training workshops and financial support were noted as essential for strengthening facilitator capacity.

## Notable Key Takeaways

**Sustainability & Expansion:** New facilitator development, administrative capacity building, and fundraising infrastructure are urgent needs.

**Cultural & Institutional Barriers:** FWP must continue its uphill work against correctional culture resistance while maintaining its integrity and participant-centered approach.

**Post-Release Support:** Stakeholders across categories urge expansion of post-release services like mentorship groups and emotional support networks.

**Visibility & Outreach:** Freedom Within should amplify storytelling through podcasts, social media, and broader community engagement strategies.

**Partnership Building:** Stronger alliances with legislative advocates, community organizations, and facility staff can support growth and influence.

