



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Hospitality Leaders Provide a Grant to Help Expand Unique Employment Program for Human Trafficking Survivors**

**SEATTLE, Wash.** – The nonprofit Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking ([BEST](#)) has received one of the inaugural No Room for Trafficking Survivor Fund grants, awarded by the [AHLA Foundation](#). The grant will support the development of a strategy to expand BEST's Safe Jobs Collaborative—a unique program that creates pathways to employment for human trafficking survivors.

The Safe Jobs Collaborative is the first program of its kind in western Washington, helping provide jobs for human trafficking survivors and youth who are at-risk for trafficking. The program provides custom and individualized support to help participants transition from a life of exploitation to safe, stable employment. Every city in the United States needs a Safe Jobs Collaborative, as human trafficking survivors face immense obstacles that make getting a job through typical job-readiness programs and traditional job application methods more difficult. They may be missing documents, lacking work experience, or have other significant barriers to gaining employment and succeeding in their jobs.

"When a person does not have the opportunity to support themselves financially, it is very difficult for them to avoid exploitation," explains Kirsten Foot, CEO and executive director for BEST. "We want to help survivors across the U.S. gain employment so they can safely leave their traffickers. This grant will permit BEST to be able to explore how we can successfully expand the Safe Jobs Collaborative beyond western Washington to assist more survivors in need of employment."

BEST initiated the Safe Jobs Collaborative in the Seattle metro region five years ago and continues to facilitate collaboration between the now 31 employers who have agreed to hire survivors, and five social service agencies who provide direct services to support participants in the program.

The role of the social service agencies is to provide individual case management for each survivor in the program. They receive wrap-around support services throughout the entire application process, interview period, onboarding process, and continue providing counseling support and other services after survivors gain employment. Since 2018, the Safe Jobs Collaborative has connected over 600 people with employment.

The grant from the AHLA Foundation will allow BEST to craft a strategy to expand the program beyond western Washington. By investing in the expansion of BEST's survivor employment program, the hospitality industry is helping survivors gain financial freedom from their traffickers, which is a long-term solution for stopping human trafficking.

“The hotel industry has had a longstanding commitment to anti-trafficking efforts,” said Anna Blue, President of the AHLA Foundation. “The Survivor Fund allows us to build upon that commitment by investing in organizations like BEST who are helping survivors forge a new path forward.”

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#### **About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)**

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to educate employers to prevent human trafficking and create pathways to employment for survivors. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with employers to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to hundreds of employers on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information visit [www.bestalliance.org](http://www.bestalliance.org).

#### **About the AHLA Foundation**

The AHLA Foundation is the charitable giving arm of the American Hotel & Lodging Association. It is dedicated to helping people build careers, improve their lives, and strengthen the lodging industry. The Foundation provides impactful solutions that drive the recruitment, retention and development of individuals for life-long careers in hospitality. To transform the industry and change lives, the Foundation connects the unemployed and underemployed with new career pathways and provides educational programs and resources to support their professional advancement. The Foundation is funded by grants and charitable contributions from generous individuals and organizations who want to support individuals seeking opportunities to thrive in the hotel and lodging industry. Learn more at [www.ahlafoundation.org](http://www.ahlafoundation.org).