BIPOC TV & Film created the following *Project Field Notes* in 2025 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project.

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BIPOC Caregiver Microgrants – Project Field Notes

The following notes were written in 2025 by Nathalie Younglai, BIPOC TV & Film's Communications Coordinator, to share reflections and insights from the organization's Level UP! Project.

Project Focus: Providing caregiver grants and self-care gifts to creatives in the screen industry who care for children and/or adults—or who require care support for themselves.

Project Inspiration: Past staff and board members of BIPOC TV & Film—including single parents—know firsthand how difficult it is to juggle parenting, work, and creative pursuits in a volatile, contract-based screen industry. This project was inspired by the many parents and caregivers we know who are trying to balance it all.

Project Context

All members and participants of BIPOC TV & Film are BIPOC creatives. Many face multiple pressures in their lives, including caregiving—not only for children, but also for parents and grandparents—as this is the cultural norm in many of our communities. Through the Level UP! program, we saw an opportunity to acknowledge and support BIPOC creatives who have additional demands on their time and energy.

Planning and Implementation

Planning for our project began in November 2024. We set up an inquiry/application form for our pilot *Caregiver Compassion Fund* initiative and carefully crafted messaging to share information about the fund. Participants in BIPOC TV & Film programs were invited to apply to receive up to $100.

We started in December 2024 by inviting participants from one of our programs via email, directing them to the inquiry form. Over the next few months, we extended the offer to participants in our other programs, continuing outreach through email and following up during phone and Zoom check-ins to remind people that the grants were there to support them.

Around this time, we also researched how to distribute funds to caregivers on our staff team in a way that would not create negative tax implications for them. Based on our research, we decided to offer support to staff members as self-care gifts.

Originally, we planned to close the *Caregiver Compassion Fund* in March, but ultimately decided to extend the application deadline until the end of April. We also chose to adapt and reframe the fund as a *BIPOC Caregiver Microgrant Program,* offering $100 grants to BIPOC creatives in the screen sector who are caregivers—or who require caregiving support themselves. There were a few reasons for this shift. First, we did not receive many applicants to the Compassion Fund after the initial callout. We also recognized that applications can be time-consuming and intimidating, and we wanted to ensure the process felt accessible and not burdensome.

We set up the new application form with as few questions as possible and offered funding on a first-come, first-served basis. We framed the microgrant as an opportunity for any BIPOC creative in the screen industry who is a caregiver—or who has care needs—to "buy some time" to work on any part of a creative project.

Pivoting slightly from the original offering made us realize that caregiving may be an invisible barrier preventing some BIPOC creatives from even applying to our programs. If people knew there was a permanent caregiver fund they could access—with a substantial and consistent amount—it would make applying to our programs more accessible to those with caregiving responsibilities.

By the end of April 2025, we had offered grants to participants in the following programs: *Showrunner Catalyst, Prime Time Ottawa Delegation, and EFM Germany Delegation*, as well as to a program alumn who was attending *KidScreen Market* in San Diego. We also provided self-care gifts to outgoing staff and a grief self-care gift to an alum who recently lost a parent.

In total, 17 BIPOC creatives and two staff members received support through the project. The creatives who were supported shared various aspects of their identities, including:

- LGBTQ2S+
- woman
- gender diverse
- parens
- solo/single parent

- caregiver to a family member with disabilities
- caregiver to a grandparent
- caregiver to a parent
- caregiver to a community elder
- grieving the death of a parent

The types of projects caregivers applied with were wide-ranging—from booking meetings with producers, developing pitch pages, writing treatments, and editing for a few hours, to workshopping a script, writing a first draft, working on a book or theatre piece, doing research, or blue-skying their next creative idea. The microgrants were used to help cover various expenses, including childcare, food, transportation (taxis/Ubers/gas), rent, and outings.

As a follow-up, we are planning a virtual gathering with all participants to offer encouragement and feedback on their creative projects. In addition, we're preparing a social media campaign for June and July 2025 that will highlight BIPOC caregivers juggling creative careers. This final wrap-up phase will include a small series that showcases the impact of the Caregiver Grant by featuring recipients and how they used their microgrants. We hope this visibility will help raise awareness across different levels of the industry and shift perceptions around caregiving and creative work.

Key Conversations

We had multiple conversations with the Board of Directors to ideate wording for the application form and outreach messaging to ensure we were being inclusive and thoughtful. We wanted to make sure our language and offer felt inviting and easy to access. We also consulted with Balancing Act to get feedback on our initial form and learned how other organizations approached presenting the offer to their stakeholders, especially around the tax implications of receiving money.

We received a lot of positive feedback during conversations about the initiative and from social media posts promoting the offer. There is a clear financial need for caregiver support in the screen industry.

One person who saw our Instagram post and was so inspired that they donated to the microgrant fund. This allowed us to support five additional BIPOC creatives.

Language Considerations

Throughout the project, we remained open to feedback and adjusted our language as needed to ensure clarity and inclusivity.

We participated in an amazing webinar where we learned the importance of clearly communicating that caregiver support funding could also be used to support people who require a caregiver themselves. In response, we adapted the wording in both the microgrant application form and the public callout to reflect this more clearly.

Sustainability

Now that the outreach materials and application form is in place, administering the grant program will be much more sustainable—if and when additional funding becomes available. Dedicated funding is needed to cover staff time required for key tasks such as check-in meetings, setting up e-transfers, sending personalized responses, and conducting follow-ups.

For this initiative to become a regular part of BIPOC TV & Film's programming, we will need program-specific funding, staff capacity (through contracts or role expansion) to manage administration, marketing support, and ideally, a mentorship or coaching component (see below).

Future Planning

We plan to continue offering financial support to caregivers in the industry. This initiative is very much in line with the values of BIPOC TV & Film. It was heartening to see how many new BIPOC creatives the grant program introduced to the organization, helping us create a more welcoming entry point for BIPOC caregivers and those with care needs.

In the future, we hope to offer slightly higher microgrant amounts. We also aim to add a career coaching or mentorship component, providing access to senior creatives in the industry to support BIPOC caregivers with their careers and projects. Additionally, we envision a peer group session, giving participants the chance to meet one another and feel connected to a community of caregivers and folks needing caregivers.

Advice

Keep an open mind. Caregiving can take many forms, including self-care for caregivers and those who need care.