

Grant Application Project in Fulfillment of Requirements for HSSJ 3110W

Taarika Gopinath and Rachel Cohen

The George Washington University; Professor Gretchen Vanderveer

Submitted to Executive Director Charlyn Anderson of Starting With Today

April 19, 2022

Grant Opportunity: The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation; General Operating Grant

Deadline: July 1, 2022 by 5:00pm EST (online portal opens up June 1)

Format: [Online Submission](#) (hyperlinked)

1) Describe your organization's history and mission. Include significant milestones and key accomplishments.

Starting With Today (SWT) connects adults living in Wards 7 and 8 of Washington D.C. and Prince George's County, Maryland with resources and support—so that they can achieve economic empowerment and emotional health, and success. SWT was founded in 2014, in the wake of the death of Trayvon Martin. Founder and Executive Director Charlyn Anderson believed that something needed to be done in the aftermath of this event, and she felt she could no longer sit idly by. This event highlighted the reality of wealth inequality, police brutality, and poverty facing Black individuals generally, and especially in the Washington D.C. area. To address these issues, SWT was founded to provide a holistic approach to mental health, financial well-being, and professional development programming and services.

SWT's mission is to create, sustain, and enhance the career, mental, and financial wellness of low-income adults in under-resourced communities by providing customized training and local resources. Through this mission, SWT ignites a fresh start for individuals in various aspects of life by providing succinct, fun, interactive, and culturally-relevant programming. It is important to note that SWT is a Black-led, Black-serving organization focused on Black healing, well-being, and liberation. SWT creates stronger communities by providing authentic learning opportunities that are contextually relevant based on the needs of the individuals served. The primary goal is to equip individuals experiencing poverty, but on the cusp of greatness with the

necessary access and resources to excel professionally, become emotionally healthy, and be financially stable. In doing so, SWT creates a foundational pathway for these communities to thrive for generations to come.

Since 2014, SWT has grown exponentially and has served a total of 4213 people through various programs. These programs are hosted by and/or delivered in collaboration with a total of 27 community partners across the Washington D.C. metro area (more on these partners later in the grant application). In addition, SWT has been recognized and has benefitted from participating in the Google for Nonprofits series to power nonprofits forward. SWT was also selected for the Fair Chance Pathways Partnership and as a community partner for the George Washington University's Community Engagement Consulting Program. And finally, one of SWT's flagship mental health programs called "The Shape Up" was recognized nationally by the Association of Black Psychologists—who invited SWT founder Charlyn Anderson to be a panelist at their 2019 Annual Conference.

2) Describe your organization's current activities, projects or programs.

Starting With Today creates programming focusing on Black well-being, healing, and liberation. The organization provides workshops that cover financial education, professional development, career advancement, and mental health tools/services. Examples of past events and programs include resume reviews, LinkedIn profile creations, job interview preparation, goal-setting workshops, financial planning and saving lessons, sessions about credit-building, budgeting seminars, and various community discussion forums. Other efforts include a barbershop and salon series—called The Shape Up: The Barbershop Talks Series and #MyHairAppt respectively—where Black mental health professionals come to local barbershops and hair salons to engage with customers on various aspects of mental health and well-being.

Finally, SWT also holds a parent engagement program by partnering with local nonprofits to support low-income, struggling caregivers.

The goals of these activities, projects and programs are to:

- make mental health and medical health services and resources more accessible - financially, culturally, and location-wise;
- create a safe space for the community to explore, ask difficult questions, and to try something new within the love and safety of the community;
- provide realistic next steps and takeaways that can be embraced and nurtured within the participants' homes and communities; and
- provide accurate, vetted information so that participants can better advocate for themselves and their families in their medical, professional, school, civic, and community spaces.

3) Describe the results achieved during the past twelve months.

Starting With Today nearly doubled program offerings over the previous year, finishing up at 42 community and parent events for 2021. Some of the new topics offered in facilitated sessions—led by licensed therapists, doctors, lawyers, professional journalists, fitness instructors, business owners, and more—including:

- Doulas & Black Maternal Health
- Understanding Vaccines
- Health & Wellness
- Juneteenth Wellness Celebration
- Black Men & Vulnerability & Toxic Masculinity
- Black Women & Pleasure

- Meditation & Yoga
- Mental Health
- Career Strategy
- The Dunes & Don'ts Insecure Recap

Additionally, SWT's 4213 participants and outreach is a 61% increase over the previous year.

SWT has documented recent results on their YouTube channel—including testimonials where multiple participants share stories demonstrating increased skills in setting goals and improving their quality of life by learning about savings, advancements in career paths, and building credit. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, SWT has hosted over 30 virtual sessions reaching over 3500 people on topics such as mental health, relationships, career management during COVID, Black maternal health, COVID in the community, vaccines, LGBTQIA+ inclusiveness, medical health, nutrition, meditation, yoga, and more.

4) Describe the results you are committed to achieving during the grant period and how you will demonstrate your success. Share qualitative and/or quantitative information.

Based on past accomplishments, there is a definite interest and market to expand existing programs, increase dosage, and grow the number of participants served. This will be the first and foremost goal of SWT during the grant period. However, to do that, SWT first needs to increase organizational capacity and sustainability. The demand for services, and the opportunity to provide needed programming with willing partners, exceeds the current staff capacity. SWT needs to hire an additional staff member to support the Executive Director who is currently the only employee. At a minimum, SWT needs to fully fund the existing Executive Director's salary and hire at least a part-time staff member, as well as consultants and/or contractors (for the most part, these will be minority-led and community-focused businesses and personnel).

To demonstrate success, SWT will implement several data collection methods including headcounts, sign-in sheets, open feedback forums, quarterly exit surveys, pre- and post-questionnaires to measure knowledge gains, informal conversations with attendees, general information forms, and more. This will provide both quantitative and qualitative data to measure effectiveness, engagement, and usefulness. SWT will also demonstrate success by continuing to build with existing partners and recruit additional community partners to host and share in the cost and implementation of programming as needed.

5) Describe the results you are hoping to achieve over the next three years.

Over the next three years, SWT will continue to increase the number of participants in workshops—which will ideally result in participants being able to demonstrate knowledge gains around financial literacy and career options through pre-and post-surveys. To obtain these results, SWT is asking for \$30,000 to begin work. Other intended impacts will be assessed through the reporting of increased usage of mental health and wellness services, as well as overall increased well-being in the target geographical area. Through post-event surveys, SWT will look at key indicators of well-being such as happiness, mental health, and physical health. With these goals in mind, SWT will also move into new programming areas surrounding business entrepreneurship.

SWT envisions opening a community workspace over the next three years. There is a pressing need for more collaborative, co-working spaces east of the Anacostia River in Washington D.C. The idea is for this space to serve as a business incubator for 30-50 entrepreneurs in an environment fostering healing, creativity, and positivity. By way of segmented and collective community programming, SWT seeks to foster innovation, new technologies, and a startup business culture to develop a competitive hub for emerging

entrepreneurs. Particularly, this space is meant to facilitate success for Black-owned businesses and to adequately fund and better support existing SWT participants.

In order for this vision to become a reality, SWT will need to identify the right partner with real estate assets. Additionally, SWT must identify significant funding to commit to a lease and to contract out for appropriate space management. But, over the next few years, SWT will continue to host workshops to teach Black adults how to use wellness as a tool for liberation and a way to receive economic relief and empowerment.

6) Describe your organization's most significant collaborations and partnerships with other organizations in the same field and geographic area.

Starting With Today has steadily grown year after year because of strategic partnerships and collaborations. Partnering with Black small businesses, entrepreneurs, and other Black-led nonprofits have been a central strategy of the organization's work. SWT selects partnerships based on shared values, location, and community roots. These partnerships include:

- Prince George's County Library System in Maryland
- Jobs Have Priority (Greenbelt)
- The Rodman Institute
- The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts
- Howard University
- George Washington University
- U. S. Dream Academy
- D.C.'s Mayor Office of Fathers, Men & Boys
- Lee's Barbershop of SE DC
- The MusicianShip

- After-School All-Stars
- The Funk Parade
- Anacostia Neighborhood Library
- Be Great DC
- WJH Media for the launch of The Shape Up Podcast

Some of the most critical of the prior partnerships include:

- Lee's Barbershop of SE DC (location for The Shape Up)
- The U.S. Dream Academy
- After-School All-Stars
- The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts

While serving participants directly, these partnerships also create an ecosystem that promotes economic growth within the Black community itself. Further, the support provided by SWT's partnerships allows for SWT's participants to receive supplemental programming and visibility. These partnerships, and many others, have powered the work SWT does by providing space, resources, and/or services to make the work come to life right in the heart of the community.

7) What makes your organization different from other groups doing similar work?

SWT sees the communities it serves as equal stakeholders. This looks like involving participants intentionally through co-collaborating on program design and service delivery. SWT's entire approach to programming stands on three pillars: financial, professional, and mental wellness. This holistic lens is unique, and it helps to address root problems that oppress and stagnate community members from attaining success individually and collectively. From the onset, SWT has provided both traditional and creative programming through workshops, group sessions, and one-on-one trainings that enhance the professional, financial, and mental situations

of participants. Starting With Today goes a few steps further than other organizations by bringing programs to the places in which communities already gather—in close collaboration with local small businesses, such as barbershops and hair salons , as well as nonprofits, and public libraries.

8) Explain how the population you serve is involved in the work of the organization, and/or how client feedback is collected and incorporated.

SWT is a 100% Black-led and Black-serving organization. Due to this, SWT has been able to build the trust of participants, collaborate with participants in the planning and shaping of programming, and solicit instant informal feedback to strengthen services. Because Executive Director Charlyn Anderson lives and works within the communities that SWT serves, she engages with participants in the community at parks, events, or stores and seeks input.

Additionally, SWT's participants frequently direct message SWT on social media with ideas, as well as text and email ideas directly to Executive Director Charlyn Anderson or board members.

9) Briefly describe the Board of Director's role in relation to leadership and staff, including how members are recruited and selected and how they carry out their responsibility for financial and programmatic oversight and fundraising. Indicate the percentage of directors who make monetary contributions.

The Board of Directors meets on a quarterly basis and as needed throughout the year to discuss special projects, provide additional support to the Executive Director, and advance the mission and visibility of SWT. One hundred percent of the members give financially to the organization. In terms of recruitment, potential Board members are invited to submit an interesting letter and resume for Board review. Selected candidates are invited to interview with the Board and Executive Director. Once completed, the Board votes on new members. And of

special note, this year, SWT is having a Board of Directors Open House to provide potential Board members with an opportunity to meet and learn more about SWT's board responsibilities.

10) Describe any significant staff or Board changes that have occurred within the past twelve months or are expected to take place in the coming year.

There have been no changes over the past twelve months. SWT expects board member recruitment to grow over the next six months. SWT hopes to add up to five new board members depending on the recruitment pool and fit.