

Friends Foundation for the Aging Proposal
Returning Grantee Proposal: Supportive Older Women's Network (SOWN)
September 15, 2023

- **A one sentence summary of the project and amount requested.**

SOWN is requesting \$25,000 to support our innovative services for older adults in Philadelphia.

- **Has the identified problem changed?**

The problem of social isolation and lack of connection of older people in Philadelphia has not changed. Lack of social connection continues to be a major public health issue with older people especially vulnerable. Baby boomers are aging and living longer with chronic health issues that can impact mobility and keep seniors homebound. Philadelphia's housing stock is not designed for older adults, often making it inaccessible and difficult for older residents to get out. Unfortunately, insufficient affordable senior housing exists in our city. COVID continues to impact older people and aging/community services in our city's neighborhoods. Many senior programs still have limited hours or have closed, fewer neighborhood/community services exist, many church services are on zoom, and older adults continue to be concerned about the risk of exposure limiting outings, family gatherings, and other social events.

What has changed is an increasing awareness of the impact of social isolation on health and well-being. In May 2023, the United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy called for urgent action to address the public health epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Dr. Murthy wrote:

*"Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health. Our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain sight – one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled, and more productive lives. **Given the significant health consequences of loneliness and isolation, we must prioritize building social connection the same way we have prioritized other critical public health issues such as tobacco, obesity, and substance use disorders.**"*

Social isolation is a crisis that impacts our health as much as smoking, blood pressure, and obesity. In fact, lacking social connection increases risk of premature death by more than 60% and the health risks of isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day! This epidemic is particularly severe for older people in our city. Philadelphia has one of the **highest percentages of older adults of any big city in the U.S.** and almost **half of our low-income seniors live alone**. This high rate of living alone can contribute to loneliness and lack of social contact leading to negative health outcomes. SOWN establishes social networks so older adults are not alone, build connections, and stay healthier.

- **Have your solution or goals changed?**

No, our solution remains the same. SOWN is requesting support for our telehealth groups to help vulnerable, homebound seniors in Philadelphia build the social connection and support they need to improve health and well-being.

• **Will your efforts/actions to impact the problem change? Describe.**

SOWN telehealth groups will continue to provide a forum for older adults to share their feelings, receive support, gain knowledge of services, allow peer exchange of ideas/supports, and build social connections. The older adults will meet weekly in small groups of 6-8 participants on a telephone conference call facilitated by our experienced clinicians. SOWN's skilled staff guide the group experience and empower the older women to share ideas, gain support, and build relationships. Group members help and support one another by sharing knowledge, resources, and resiliency to assist others coping with similar concerns. Frequently, relationships developed in the telehealth group extend beyond the meeting to friendships that sustain seniors at home. Our telehealth groups also improve the well-being of participants by providing nutrition education, healthy living workshops, health literacy, knowledge of services/benefits, and resource information for isolated seniors. SOWN telehealth groups provide an easily accessible, on-going support mechanism that truly becomes a lifeline connecting homebound older adults in our community. SOWN harnesses the power of community to support one another and build sustained relationships that improve health and well-being of underserved seniors as they age. SOWN will provide 9 to 11 telehealth groups each week for 50 weeks over the year. We will utilize an open-enrollment model where new members are incorporated into groups.

• **Are there changes in funding or program implementation partners?**

SOWN will continue to partner with over 20 community-based sites where we have established formal relationships including senior housing facilities, senior centers, community centers, and more. Our grassroots approach includes working with PCA, CARIE, LGBT Elder Initiative, Senior Law Center, and many other agencies that provide information/advocacy services for seniors in Philadelphia. Our current key funding partners include The 25th Century Foundation, Erichson Charitable Trust, Impact 100 Foundation, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, and The Sarah Ralston Foundation.

• **How will you know if your actions are having an impact? How are you measuring success?**

SOWN is a data-driven organization with strong measures and data collection tools to track and analyze our impact. We will conduct regular outcomes evaluations using quantitative and qualitative methods. Our SOWN Survey measures key goals and program impact. It is conducted at intake for baseline data and yearly intervals. The survey includes a core component measuring outcomes common to all programs, including items adapted from Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale and PHQ4 depression screen, and additional questions to measure outcomes relevant to specific programs. SOWN's unique model has a profound impact. In our most recent annual evaluation in July 2023, 98% of participants felt less isolated and 100% felt more empowered belonging to their SOWN group.

Over the next year, we anticipate having the following impact:

- 95% of participants will report less isolation and have increased social connection
- 90% will feel they belong to a group of people who they can count on
- 80% will have increased access to information and resources

Our participants frequently mention the power of their SOWN group. Hear the impact of SOWN in their words: *“Being a part of SOWN I know I have a group of women that understand and support me. I can call them, and they can call me. They understand, give advice, and don't judge me. I don't know what I would have done if SOWN was not here. SOWN has changed my life.”*

- **How will you sustain the program after the grant period?**

SOWN recognized 40 years ago the critical link between health and social isolation for older adults. SOWN is a creative organization with an entrepreneurial spirit. We have provided our telehealth groups for over 20 years by accessing private foundation support, individual donations, and government funds through PA's managed long-term services and supports program (MLTSS). Recently, we submitted a 3-year proposal to the Sarah Ralston Foundation to create a pilot project to expand our telehealth group program in 2024 with healthcare providers. We also plan to sustain our telehealth program by marketing it to healthcare providers as an effective method to keep older adults healthier. Potential organizations we will approach include managed care organizations, Medicare Advantage plans, specialized healthcare providers for older people (such as Oak Street Health), and Medicare supplemental healthcare insurance plans.

- **A project budget with projected income (including other sources) and expenses.**

Please see included budget.

**Supportive Older Women's Network
TELEGROUPS Project Budget
July 2023- June 2024**

	REVENUE	
1	Contracts	
2	PA Long Term Care Options	10,000
3	PCA Subsidized Housing	18,000
4		28,000
5	Grants	
6	Erichson Charitable Trust	10,000
7	<i>Friends Foundation for Aging (this proposal)</i>	25,000
8	Impact 100 Philadelphia	15,000
9	The 25th Century Foundation	35,000
10	The Sarah Ralston Foundation	20,000
11		105,000
12	Other Revenue	
13	Investment Income	-
14	Individual & Board Contributions	-
15	Revenue Other	-
16		-
17	TOTAL REVENUE	133,000
18	EXPENSE	
19	Salaries and Benefits/Taxes	
20	Salaries	96,462
21	Benefits/Taxes	18,181
22		114,643
23	Contract Services	
24	Accounting and Audit	1,633
25	Grantsmanship	-
26	Benefits & Payroll Admin	488
27	IT Systems/Computer Mangmnt	2,688
28	Prof. Svcs (Consultants, Data Analyst)	3,984
29		8,793
30	Other Expense	
31	Program Expenses	-
32	Program Incentives	530
33	Client Assistance	-
34	Meeting Expenses	-
35	Transportation	-
36	Conferences	249
37	Dues, Fees, Subscriptions	291
38	Marketing / Communications	-
39	Photocopy/Postage/Printing	-
40	Office Supplies	365
41	Equipment	-
42	Telephone / Internet	730
43	Rent	6,172
44	Insurance	1,062
45	Bank / Finance Fees	166
46	Depreciation	-
47		9,565
48	TOTAL EXPENSE	133,000
49	NET	-