

Friends Foundation for the Aging SOWN Grant Report September 2023

1. What problem were you addressing? What solution did you propose to address it?

SOWN was addressing the public health crisis of social isolation. Lack of social connection continues to be a major public health issue with older people especially vulnerable. 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.

We proposed support for our signature SOWN telehealth support groups to help vulnerable, homebound seniors in Philadelphia build the social connection they need to improve health and well-being.

2. What actions did you take? What worked and didn't work toward your objectives? Please share any unanticipated benefits or barriers encountered.

SOWN's telehealth services for are designed to combat the debilitating effects of isolation and depression experienced by nursing home-eligible, homebound elderly women who live on low incomes and have elected to age in place. This was accomplished by providing regular weekly intervention with supportive peer groups facilitated by a licensed clinical social worker. Identifying issues and problems as they emerged led to resolving them before they become more serious and posed threats to health and safety. SOWN social workers incorporate key strategies of trauma-informed practice in their work with these older adults: 1) recognize trauma's widespread impact, understand potential paths for recovery; 2) recognize its signs and symptoms; 3) seek to actively resist re-traumatization.

We are pleased to report our telehealth groups are robust. We are currently providing nine weekly support groups and workshops for our participants. Each week, SOWN Licensed Clinical social workers (LCSWs) provided group counseling via teletherapy to older adults. For most of the older women connecting via conventional conference calling would be impossible. SOWN's system is designed for ease of use, requiring only that participant answers our call and then press "one." The women both share concerns, joys, sorrows, strategies, and solutions with their peers and receive professional counseling, while never needing to leave their homes. They can continue to participate by phone if they enter the hospital or a short-term rehabilitation center. Topics during the last year included:

- Ambiguous Loss
- Identifying Burnout and Coping Tools
- Positive Visualization
- Everyday Self-Care
- Identifying and Naming Feelings
- Coping Tools for Anxiety
- Coping Tools for Depression
- Navigating complex family relationships
- Forgiveness and Acceptance

- Healthy Friendships
- Making Time for Joy

A barrier we continue to encounter is older adults are referred to SOWN's telehealth groups through service coordination providers of PA's long-term services and support program, Community Health Choices (CHC). SOWN wants to expand our successful telehealth service to a larger audience. Many older adults in Philadelphia are not eligible for the CHC program due to financial status or level of care, or do not want to participate in the CHC program because of concerns about estate recovery, choice of providers, or sharing information.

3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? What did you learn? Please include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work.

SOWN is a data-driven organization with strong measures and data collection tools to track and analyze our impact. We conduct regular outcome 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 by belonging to their SOWN group.

We are pleased to share the outcomes from our telehealth groups from our 2223 survey:

- 88% of participants have been provided with helpful knowledge and resources.
- 100% of participants belong to a group of people who understand and accept them.
- 100% of participants feel they are not alone.
- 88% of participants feel they are helping others and having an impact on their lives.
- 88% of participants feel they are getting help with their problems.
- 72% of participants feel they use knowledge and resources learned from SOWN to deal with their difficulties.

Number of telegroup participants for FY 22-23: 97

Number of telegroups: 9

Demographic breakdown of telegroup participants:

Race:

Black/African American: 80%

White: 13%

Multiracial: 5%

Hispanic/Latino: 2%

Gender

Female: 99%

Male: 1%

Age

50-59: 6%

60-69: 21%

70-79: 37%

80+: 36%

What we continue to learn is our telehealth services play a vital role in the well-being of our clients' lives. Here are some quotes from our telehealth groups gathered in our recently conducted survey:

"SOWN helps personal growth, development, and continual learning. We laugh with each other and at each other in a good and kind and encouraging way. We have bonds that once forged are not broken."

"I enjoy talking to people during the calls because that make me realize that I'm not the only one in the world with problems, because sometimes that's how I feel."

"I would say that it's a very positive group and especially for people who don't have anyone. Some may not have many people in their lives and so that would be a good avenue for them to get involved in. It's encouraging to hear what others have gone through and it gives you more faith to believe. There are people your age or older and so many times older people may not have anyone to talk with or understand."

4. How did partnerships/collaborations enhance or challenge the project?

SOWN partners 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. All our partnerships are extremely beneficial to the project.

5. Include a budget and actual for the project during the reporting period.

See attached budget.

6. What conversations have you had on how to sustain the project after the grant, and do you have plans to share your results with other organizations?

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.

7. Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do to facilitate your work?

SOWN has valued our interactions with FFA. Thank you for being available to us.

8. Additional comments:

**Supportive Older Women's Network
TELEHEALTH GROUPS Project
July 2022- June 2023**

	Budget	Actuals
REVENUE		
Contracts		
PA Long Term Care Options		6,816
PCA Subsidized Housing		22,365
	28,288	29,181
Grants		
City of Phila PromiseZone		15,000
Erichson Charitable Trust		8,000
Friends Foundation for Aging (this report)	25,000	10,000
Impact 100 Philadelphia		10,000
Scattergood/PHL EITC		5,000
The 25th Century Foundation		35,000
	82,270	83,000
Other Revenue		
Investment Income		
Individual & Board Contributions	12,450	8,091
Revenue Other	1,992	
	14,442	8,091
TOTAL REVENUE	125,000	120,272
EXPENSES		
Salaries, Taxes and Benefits *		
Salaries	78,687	75,572
Taxes and Benefits	14,524	14,434
	93,210	90,006
Contract Services		
Benefits and Payroll Admin	581	636
Financial Services/Audit	2,324	2,324
Grantsmanship	-	-
IT Systems/Computer Mangmnt	3,320	2,965
Prof. Svcs (Consultants, Data Analyst)	10,707	8,871
	16,932	14,796
Other Expenses		
Program Expenses	-	-
Program Incentives	-	-
Client Assistance		-
Meeting Expenses	99	163
Transportation	116	200
Communications/Paid Media	498	596
Photocopy/Postage/Printing	624	537
Office Supplies	374	348
Equipment Computer / Office	-	-
Conferences	110	99
Dues, Fees, Subscriptions	332	440
Telephone	797	718
Rent	8,630	9,268
Insurance (P&C, PL, DO)	830	1,224
Bank / Finance fees	125	204
Depreciation	2,323	1,673
	14,858	15,470
Total Expenses	125,000	120,272
Net	-	-

* The Friends Foundation for Aging grant was applied to Salaries and fully expended. Thank you.