

# WOMEN UNITED GRANT APPLICATION FORM

## Organization Information

### Organization Name

Bright Side Opportunities Center

### EIN

23-3062048

### Address

515 Hershey Ave  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603  
United States

### Contact Name

Isiah Perry

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### Executive Director / President (If different)

Willonda McCloud

## Eligibility Criteria

**Is your organization a registered nonprofit organization with an official letter of determination of 501c3 status from the Internal Revenue Service?**

Yes

**Has your organization operated in Lancaster County for at least one year (operating in Lancaster before July 1, 2024?)**

Yes

**Does your organization or program you are requesting funding for in this application serve primarily women over the age of 18?**

Yes

**Does your organization provide services to families at or below the ALICE threshold in Lancaster County?**

Yes

**Is your organization delinquent on any state or federal debt?**

No

**Does your organization share United Way's view of collaborative and inclusive service to the entire community, without excluding anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor not relevant to a person's eligibility for service or ability to contribute?**

Yes

## Has your organization update your listing with PA 211 in the last 12 months?

Yes

## Application Elements

### Organization Description

BSOC, founded by Lancaster's largest African American congregation Bright Side Baptist Church has served Lancaster County 25 years. Our mission is to uplift individuals through holistic programming in health, education, and social services, creating pathways for the community to thrive emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

BSOC offers an inclusive environment with state-of-the-art facilities, including a fitness center, medical clinic, PIAA standard gym, and educational classrooms. Through our multi-generational programs, we serve entire families providing equitable access to opportunities that strengthen both individuals and the broader community.

One of our proudest moments this year was welcoming an Afghan refugee mother and daughter into their first educational experiences: the mother joined ESL classes through The Haven, while her daughter built a model bridge in our STEM Girls Leadership Academy. In a world where girls are often denied education, BSOC opens doors and redefines futures.

From middle school girls learning to negotiate salaries to senior women breaking powerlifting records, we believe every stage of life holds potential. Guided by our core values diversity, respect, integrity, a servant's heart, and collaboration we are committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive Lancaster where each day has a new opportunity.

### Commitment to Equity

Bright Side Opportunities Center (BSOC) serves Lancaster County residents who face intersecting barriers of race, gender, immigration status, and economic insecurity. Women in our region face significant economic challenges: according to the 2023 ALICE Report, 35% of Lancaster County households are ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed), earning above the federal poverty level but below the cost of living. Our work is grounded in neighborhoods like SoWe in the City of Lancaster, where that figure rises to 54%. Many of the women we serve are single mothers, immigrants, or first-generation college students. Our community includes those furthest from access: Black and Latina women, who in Lancaster County have poverty rates of 29% and 21%, respectively, compared to 7% among white women (Lancaster County Racial Equity Profile, 2023).

Women in Lancaster County earn significantly less than men across all major industries. From 2016–2020, full-time working women earned just 76.4% of men's earnings, a gap worse than the national average and the third-worst among surrounding counties. These inequities persist even in roles where women outnumber men and reflect the systemic undervaluation of women's labor. At the state level, if Pennsylvania's working women were paid equally to comparable men, their poverty rate would fall by 39.2%, and the state economy would gain nearly \$20 billion in additional earnings—equal to 2.5% of Pennsylvania's GDP (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021). Nationally, women earn just 83 cents for every dollar earned by men (AAUW, The Simple Truth, 2025), limiting long-term financial security through reduced retirement savings, lower rates of homeownership, and diminished wealth-building opportunities.

While disparities are intensified for women of color, all women in Lancaster County benefit from greater pay equity, access to in-demand credentials like cybersecurity certifications, and support navigating financial systems. Our leadership and staff reflect the broader community, and we design programs with input from participants, ensuring their voices shape the resources they receive.

This project speaks directly to the priorities outlined in the Lancaster County Racial Equity Profile—increasing access to living wages, reducing educational barriers, and advancing economic justice for women countywide. In serving women at the intersection of ambition and adversity, we create sisterhood of changemakers, working together to dismantle economic barriers across Lancaster County.

## Proposal Details

### Main Priority Area

Women's Financial Stability

### Grant Dollar Amount Requested

## What percent of the overall project budget is covered by the Women United grant?

29

### Project Description

Bright Side Opportunities Center (BSOC) proposes to expand its proven career readiness curriculum—originally developed for high school scholars in the Sismantle{Tech} program—to serve women ages 18 and older in Lancaster County. This community-based workshop series will focus on financial literacy, career advancement, and long-term economic stability.

The project will support adult women navigating financial insecurity, career transition, and wage inequity. Workshops will include:

- Restorative community circles designed to deepen sisterhood, explore lived experiences, and process challenges such as workplace bias—creating space for reflection, healing, and collective growth.
- AAUW's Work Smart training, covering market-based salary research, benefits evaluation, personal budgeting, and persuasive negotiation strategies to increase earning potential and financial confidence.
- Financial literacy sessions led by M&T Bank on budgeting, banking, and credit management.
- Professional development workshops adapted from Elizabethtown College's Backpack to Briefcase program, including resume writing, business etiquette, and job interviewing.
- Networking events that bring adult participants together with Sismantle{Tech} scholars, fostering mentorship and intergenerational learning.
- Introduction to tech careers through Black Girls Hack, providing exposure to cybersecurity pathways, mentorship, and resources for women interested in transitioning into tech.

This is an expansion of a successful model. Since its launch, Sismantle{Tech} has equipped high school girls from historically excluded backgrounds with both technical skills and professional development. Extending these supports to adult women will broaden impact and strengthen economic mobility pathways.

This project aligns directly with Women United's financial stability priority area, addressing strategies to increase earning potential, strengthen financial literacy, and reduce reliance on unsustainable debt. BSOC's approach is both relational and skills-based—meeting women where they are and equipping them to thrive in the workforce and beyond. The expanded initiative will run from June 2025 to June 2026, offered at no cost to ALICE-identified participants. It will blend expert instruction, community voice, and peer connection to help women take control of their financial futures and advance their career goals.

### Collaboration

Yes, BSOC will collaborate with both external partners and internal leadership to deliver this initiative. Externally, we will continue our partnerships with M&T Bank for financial literacy training and Elizabethtown College's School of Business for professional development workshops based on their Backpack to Briefcase curriculum. We will also collaborate with Black Girls Hack to introduce adult women to tech and cybersecurity career pathways, offering mentorship and entry-level exposure. To foster deeper relational growth, we will implement restorative community circles based on practices developed by Advoz, creating space for participants to build trust and process shared experiences such as workplace bias. We will also implement AAUW's nationally recognized Work Smart curriculum, equipping participants with practical tools for salary negotiation, benefits evaluation, and financial planning.

We will leverage the expertise of BSOC's own leadership, a diverse and accomplished group of women leaders who reflect the communities we serve. Workshop facilitation, mentorship, and recruitment will be supported by staff and

board members including Willonda McCloud, Willeta Calvin, Sally Winchell, Deborah Davis (DSW), Gretchel Hathaway (PhD), Towahna Rhim (PhD), Valerie Perry-Cross (PhD), Salena Coachman, Aimme Deraco, Stacy Kelley, and Janet Simms. Their lived experience, professional expertise, and community ties will enrich every aspect of the program.

These collaborations ensure the initiative remains community-rooted, culturally responsive, and guided by women who understand the challenges and aspirations of our participants.

## **Implementation Plan**

Program Planning (April 19 – June 30, 2025)

Although the funding begins July 1, BSOC will begin foundational planning activities in the spring to ensure a seamless program launch. These early actions will be supported by existing BSOC infrastructure and capacity:

- Finalize workshop calendar and secure spaces at BSOC and partner locations.
- Confirm facilitator availability and schedule sessions with partners (M&T Bank, Elizabethtown College, Black Girls Hack, AAUW).
- Promote registration through BSOC networks, community partners, local organizations, and social media.
- Begin participant recruitment, prioritizing ALICE-identified women 18+ across Lancaster County.
- Host an orientation session for facilitators, mentors, and partners to review program goals, trauma-informed practices, and circle facilitation techniques.

Program Launch & Summer Intensive (July – August 2025):

In conjunction with the Sismantle{Tech} summer program

- Launch orientation and welcome sessions for adult participants to build rapport and set expectations.
- Restorative community circle, facilitated in partnership with Advoz, to create a structured, trauma-informed space where participants can explore lived experiences, share challenges such as workplace bias, and build collective support. (3 Sessions)
- AAUW Work Smart salary negotiation workshops focused on pay equity, benefits evaluation, and self-advocacy. (6 sessions)
- Financial literacy workshops led by M&T Bank on budgeting, credit, and long-term planning. (3 sessions)
- Professional development sessions with Elizabethtown College covering resume writing, interviewing, and business communication. (6 workshops)
- Introduction to tech and cybersecurity careers with Black Girls Hack, providing foundational exposure and mentorship in a high-growth industry. (2 sessions)
- Networking events with high school Sismantle{Tech} scholars to foster mentorship, intergenerational learning, and community connection. (2 sessions)

Fall 2025 (September – November)

Monthly workshops with focused outcomes:

- September: Restorative community circle exploring workplace identity and shared experiences
- October: Financial literacy workshop on debt management and credit repair (M&T Bank)
- November: Career advancement workshop focused on preparing for performance reviews and promotion

Winter 2025–2026 (December – February)

Building resilience and strategic planning:

- December: Restorative circle focused on navigating bias and microaggressions
- January: Financial planning workshop on emergency savings and budgeting (M&T Bank)
- February: Career transition workshop exploring new industries, transferable skills, and re-entry planning

Spring 2026 (March – May)

Preparing for long-term growth:

- March: Resume and interview skills clinic with mock interviews and feedback
- April: Budgeting and goal-setting workshop to build a six-month personal finance plan
- May: Leadership and mentorship workshop to prepare participants for supporting future program cohorts

Program Wrap-Up & Transition (June 2026):

- Final restorative community circle for reflection and closure

- Networking and celebration event bringing together participants, partners, facilitators, and Sismantle{Tech} scholars to foster continued community
- One-on-one exit consultations for resume updates, goal tracking, and referrals
- Post-program evaluations and feedback collection
- Launch of alumni engagement plan offering future opportunities for connection, leadership, and mentorship

## Outcomes & Evaluation

### Outcomes & Evaluation

#### a. Expected Outcomes and Impact

##### i. Attainable and Impactful Goals:

- Provide consistent, high-quality financial literacy and career readiness workshops to women across Lancaster County.
- Track meaningful progress among a focused cohort of 15 self-identified ALICE women who participate fully in the program.
- Strengthen financial confidence, professional self-advocacy, and workforce readiness among participants.

##### ii. Tangible and Measurable Outcomes (for tracked cohort):

- 90% of the tracked participants (13+) will complete the core curriculum, including AAUW Work Smart, financial literacy, and professional development workshops.
- 80% will set and make progress toward one personal financial or employment goal, such as reducing debt, creating a budget, or updating a resume.
- 60% will report increased confidence in navigating salary discussions, managing finances, or applying to new job opportunities.
- In addition, larger community workshops will be held throughout the year and will remain open to all women, with flexible attendance and light-touch evaluation such as sign-in sheets and feedback forms.

iii. Impact on Individuals and Families: The focused cohort will receive personalized support, resources, and follow-up, creating measurable shifts in financial literacy and self-advocacy. For women facing the realities of underemployment, single parenting, or limited access to higher education, this support can reduce economic stress and open new pathways. The open workshops will amplify this impact across the community, creating access points for women at different stages of readiness.

#### b. Evaluation Plan

##### i. Program Metrics: BSOC will track data for the core cohort of 15 self-reported ALICE participants using:

- Pre/post self-assessments on financial knowledge and workplace confidence
- Goal-setting and progress forms
- Workshop attendance logs
- End-of-program check-ins to capture outcomes in financial behavior, employment status, and self-reported income stability

For broader workshops, BSOC will use:

- Sign-in sheets and participant counts
- feedback surveys
- Facilitator reflections and partner check-ins to monitor workshop effectiveness

This dual approach keeps evaluation manageable while still offering quantifiable impact and a clear commitment to continuous learning and community responsiveness.

## Documents

### Required Documents

- [BSOC-Board-Of-Directors-2025.pdf](#)
- [FINAL-BSOC-990-2023.pdf](#)
- [FINAL-BSOC-FINANCIAL-STATEMENTS-2023.pdf](#)

- [SismantleTech-Women-United-Budget.xlsx](#)
- [IRS-501C3-Status-Letter-1.pdf](#)