

2026 WOMEN UNITED GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Organization Information

Organization Name

SWAN - Scaling Walls a Note At a Time

EIN

45-1353501

Project Name

Rising Stars Program

Address

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United States

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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, 2025?)

Yes

Does your organization or program you are requesting funding for in this application serve primarily women and/ or teen girls?

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

Executive Summary

SWAN's Rising Stars program helps to empower girls impacted by parental incarceration through a unique combination of trauma-informed mental health support and music education. The program provides a safe, consistent environment where participants engage in mentorship, counseling, and skill-building through music. Many of these girls face significant emotional challenges, instability, and limited access to supportive resources. Rising Stars fosters resilience, confidence, and leadership while improving emotional regulation and school engagement. Through performances, peer connection, and individualized support, girls develop a strong sense of identity, belonging, and hope for their future.

Organization Description

SWAN: Scaling Walls a Note at a Time is a Lancaster County nonprofit dedicated to advocating for children affected by parental incarceration through life-changing music and mentoring programs. Founded in 2011, SWAN was built on the belief that music can serve as a powerful tool for healing, emotional expression, and personal growth.

SWAN provides free, trauma-informed programming to youth who often face significant barriers including poverty, instability, and limited access to supportive resources. Through year-round after-school programs, summer instruction, and partnerships with local schools and community organizations, participants receive individualized music lessons, ensemble experiences, mentorship, and access to mental health support.

Our work creates safe, consistent environments where youth can build confidence, develop social-emotional skills, and experience a sense of belonging. By integrating music education with trauma-informed care, SWAN equips young people with the tools needed to navigate challenges, strengthen relationships, and pursue positive futures. We are committed to serving every eligible child, ensuring equitable access to high-quality programming that fosters resilience and long-term success.

Commitment to Equity

SWAN serves girls in Lancaster County who are impacted by parental incarceration, many of whom live in low-income households and experience instability, trauma, and limited access to supportive resources. The majority of participants identify as Black or Hispanic/Latina and often live with guardians or extended family members due to family disruption. These girls frequently face barriers such as stigma, emotional stress, housing insecurity, and reduced access to extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that support healthy development.

Serving this population advances equity by providing free access to high-quality music education, mentorship, and trauma-informed mental health support—opportunities that are often inaccessible due to financial constraints. By removing cost, transportation, and participation barriers, SWAN ensures girls disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities can access consistent, supportive programming.

SWAN elevates community voice by working closely with school partners, families, and participants to shape programming based on expressed needs. Girls are encouraged to share their experiences through songwriting, performance, and leadership opportunities, empowering them to tell their stories and build confidence.

This work aligns with findings from the Lancaster County Racial Equity Profile, which highlights disparities in income, educational access, and support systems affecting youth of color, particularly those facing family instability.

Proposal Details

Main Priority Area

Women's and/ or Teen's Health

Grant Dollar Amount Requested

\$20,000.00

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

4

Will this program/project start or continue to operate if you do not receive 100% of the funding requested?

Yes

Project Description

SWAN proposes to continue its Rising Stars program serving girls in Lancaster County impacted by parental incarceration. These girls often face significant emotional trauma, instability at home, and limited access to safe, supportive after-school environments. Without targeted support, they are at increased risk for anxiety, depression, disengagement from school, and social isolation. This project provides consistent, trauma-informed programming that promotes resilience, confidence, and long-term stability.

Rising Stars is an established program that integrates music education, mentorship, and mental health support into a structured after-school and summer model. Through this project, SWAN will provide girls with weekly small-group and individualized music instruction, access to trauma-informed counseling, mentorship from caring adults, and opportunities to participate in collaborative performances. Girls engage in songwriting, ensemble practice, and leadership activities that encourage self-expression, teamwork, and confidence-building.

Programming takes place in partnership with local schools and community spaces to ensure accessibility and consistency. SWAN staff and trained instructors implement a trauma-informed approach, recognizing the unique experiences of girls impacted by parental incarceration. Participants receive individualized attention to support emotional wellness and personal skill development. Mentorship components focus on healthy relationships, self-esteem, and goal setting.

This work advances priorities related to empowering girls and promoting equity by providing free access to enrichment opportunities often unavailable to youth from low-income or unstable households. By removing financial barriers and offering supportive services, SWAN ensures teen girls can fully participate. Through consistent engagement, Rising Stars helps participants build resilience, improve emotional regulation, increase school engagement, and develop leadership skills, creating meaningful and lasting impact.

Collaboration

Yes, SWAN collaborates closely with the School District of Lancaster to effectively serve girls participating in the Rising Stars program. This partnership is central to ensuring participants receive comprehensive, trauma-informed support that addresses both emotional and developmental needs.

Through collaboration with the School District of Lancaster, SWAN utilizes school-based space for programming, receives student referrals, and coordinates with school counselors, social workers, and support staff. This coordination allows girls to receive consistent emotional support and ensures alignment between school-day and after-school services. School personnel also help identify participants who may benefit from additional mentoring and mental health resources.

SWAN also partners with local arts organizations and community groups to provide performance opportunities and mentorship experiences. These partnerships allow teen girls to showcase their talents, build confidence, and strengthen connections within the community. Additionally, collaboration with mental health professionals supports the trauma-informed approach embedded in the program.

Together, these partnerships create a coordinated support system that reduces barriers to participation, strengthens emotional wellness, and enhances opportunities for teen girls to develop leadership, resilience, and a sense of

belonging.

Implementation Plan

SWAN will implement the Rising Stars program for teen girls through structured, trauma-informed after-school and summer programming designed to promote emotional wellness, confidence, and skill development. Activities will occur consistently throughout the program period to ensure sustained engagement and meaningful outcomes.

Program implementation will include weekly small-group and individualized music instruction (if requested) where girls learn instruments, vocal skills, and collaborative performance techniques. Participants will engage in songwriting and creative expression activities that provide healthy outlets for processing emotions and building self-confidence. Mentorship sessions will focus on goal setting, self-esteem, healthy relationships, and leadership development.

Teen girls will also participate in structured group rehearsals that promote teamwork, communication, and peer support. These rehearsals will lead to community performances, providing opportunities for participants to build confidence and celebrate their accomplishments. Homework help and academic support will be available to reinforce school engagement and stability.

Trauma-informed support will be integrated throughout the program. SWAN staff will collaborate with school-based counselors from the School District of Lancaster to ensure participants receive consistent emotional support. Informal wellness check-ins and individualized encouragement will be incorporated into weekly programming.

Key activities during the program period include:

- Weekly music instruction (individual and group)
- Songwriting and creative expression sessions
- Mentorship and leadership development activities
- Group rehearsals and collaborative practice
- Academic support and homework assistance
- Trauma-informed wellness check-ins
- Coordination with School District of Lancaster staff
- Community performances and showcases

These coordinated activities create a safe, structured environment where teen girls build resilience, develop skills, and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Outcomes & Evaluation

a. Outcomes

If awarded funding, SWAN will support teen girls participating in the Rising Stars program to achieve measurable improvements in emotional wellness, confidence, and engagement in positive activities. The program's goals focus on strengthening resilience and creating supportive pathways for girls impacted by parental incarceration.

Specific outcomes include:

At least 85% of participating girls will demonstrate improved emotional regulation and coping skills, measured through staff observations and wellness check-ins.

80% of participants will show increased confidence and self-expression through participation in music instruction and performances.

75% of teen girls will maintain or improve school engagement, reflected in attendance, homework completion, or teacher feedback.

90% of participants will consistently engage in weekly programming and mentorship activities.

Through these services, girls will build stronger peer relationships, improve communication skills, and develop a sense of belonging. Families and caregivers may observe improved behavior, reduced anxiety, and increased motivation in school and extracurricular activities. Participants gain positive adult mentorship, structured after-school engagement,

and opportunities for leadership, reducing isolation and strengthening protective factors.

b. Evaluation

SWAN will evaluate outcomes using both quantitative and qualitative program metrics. Staff will track participation and engagement through attendance records and activity logs. Emotional wellness progress will be monitored through regular check-ins and pre- and post-program assessments aligned with trauma-informed practices. School engagement will be evaluated through communication with School District of Lancaster partners, teacher feedback, and homework participation.

Program metrics will include:

Number of girls enrolled and regularly attending
Frequency of participation in weekly activities
Participation in performances and leadership opportunities
Documented wellness check-in improvements
School engagement indicators and feedback from school partners
Participant and caregiver feedback surveys

These measures will allow SWAN to monitor progress, adjust programming, and ensure meaningful outcomes for teen girls served.

Documents

Required Documents

- [StatementofFinancialPosition-2025.pdf](#)
- [SWAN-Financial-Review-2024.pdf](#)
- [SWAN_Board-of-Directors_2025.pdf](#)
- [SWAN-2026-Budget_final_3-13-26.pdf](#)
- [IRS-Letter-501c3.pdf](#)