



**SMITH**  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

# FOREVER FORWARD

Transformative Leadership Development Program:  
Forever Forward Fellowship  
Pre- and Post-Evaluation



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# Section I. From Our CEO



On behalf of the Smith Family Foundation of New Jersey, I would like to extend our congratulations and gratitude to our 2020 *Forever Forward Fellowship* participants, HomeWorks and HelpSelf, for transforming their programming to large-scale opportunities for Trenton's youth.

As *Forever Forward Fellowship* participants, HomeWorks and HelpSelf received multi-year funding and leadership mentoring to expand their programming, strengthen their organizations, and increase their impact in the city of Trenton. From implementing strategies focused on making higher education the normal next step for participants, to purchasing a home as their headquarters, these organizations have advanced the Smith Family Foundation's mission to empower our community, cultivate leaders, and transform lives.

The Foundation has been honored to support the staff and board members for being the backbone of our *Forever Forward* participating organizations. I would personally like to highlight and congratulate the leadership of Natalie Tung, Executive Director of HomeWorks, and Lawrence M. Boyd, III, Executive Director of HelpSelf, for their commitment and vision throughout the last three years, as they worked tirelessly to secure the success of their organizations throughout this fellowship.

HomeWorks and HelpSelf are committed to continuing the work to ensure Trenton residents have access to opportunities to pursue higher education, be trauma informed, and promote economic growth. It has been a blessing to be a part of this transformational work and to see such commitment to justice, equity, and the City of Trenton.

## Section I.

Led by Matthew 5:15-16, we will continue sowing into Trenton in partnership with its residents and grassroots organizations, amplifying the City's Light and allowing all to see the good works of its community.



*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

In Service,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Katherine Nunnally".

Katherine N. Nunnally,MPA  
Chief Executive Officer





# Section II. Background

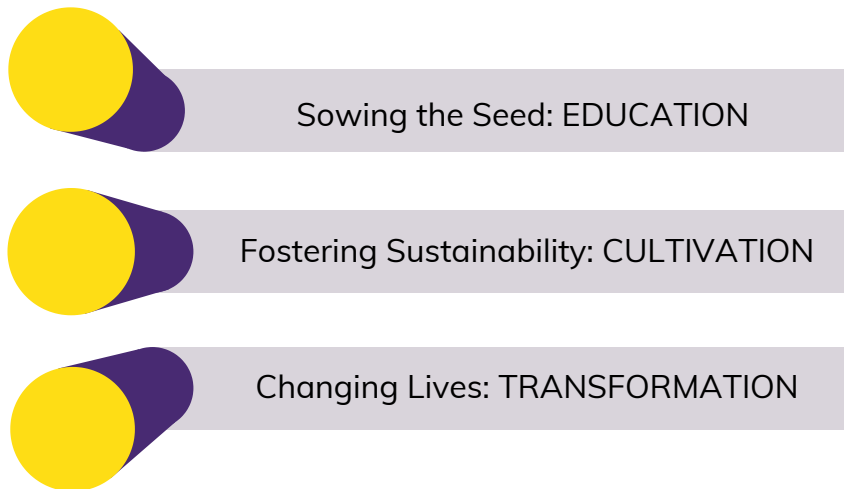
The Smith Family Foundation of New Jersey (SFFNJ) was established in 2016. As leaders in their respective communities, the members of the Smith family banded together to finance and commit their philanthropic efforts of “sowing seeds” in their hometown of Trenton, New Jersey. The family was blessed with financial resources that would later support students and bolster Trenton’s non-profit sector with physical roots and highly effective, financially diverse, and culturally competent organizations with a passion to serve and empower Trentonians.

The Smith family, led by matriarch Pearlie Smith, is composed of Trenton Central High School graduates and fifth-generation Trentonians. Grounded in their Christian values and love of community, they believe that with the proper resources and support, communities can flourish and be self-sustaining. As residents in the SouthWard of Trenton, the Smith family has lived and persevered despite the systemic challenges they and city families have faced and continue to face, specifically poverty and its pervasiveness in the city.

The core values of SFFNJ are education, cultivation, and transformation, with a mission of empowering our community, cultivating leaders and transforming lives. The transformative work that the Smith Family Foundation is implementing throughout the City of Trenton is called, “The Purple Ribbon”. The foundation provides leadership development and funding to increase the impact of organizations that serve the citizens of Trenton. They are building a community that works collectively to promote a healthy and thriving urban hub. The Purple Ribbon is a data driven framework and includes their Transformative Leadership Development Program, the Non-Profit Incubation Center, the #IAmtheChange Movement, annual grants, and the Forever Forward Fellowship.



### Core Values:



**Service Agenda:** "Higher Education as the Normal Next Step" as defined by SFFNJ takes on several pathways:

- 4 year college/university
- Vocational/trade school
- Career readiness for adults and youth
- Continuing education and leadership development for leaders in the non-profit sector

The foundation has invested over one million dollars into the growth and development of Trenton's residents and organizations as a result, hundreds of lives have been positively impacted. SFFNJ will continue sowing into Trenton for decades to come.

# Section III. Forever Forward Fellowship Overview

The *Forever Forward Fellowship* was created to provide funding and leadership development to Trenton-based grassroots organizations, including the religious sector. As a three-year grant, it provides organizations with the channels to increase capacity, deepen their networks in the City of Trenton, and strengthen internal practices, policies, and procedures.

In addition to the funding that is provided, organizations are offered a myriad of workshops, personal and professional development, and staff and board training opportunities. This includes mandatory participation in the Transformative Leadership Development Program which equips the administrative and governing leadership of participating organizations with the tools required to increase their impact and executive coaching for the Executive Directors of each organization.

In order to qualify, organizations must have an annual operating budget of \$250,000 or less. They must also have an established board and have been in operation for at least three years. Lastly, they must have at least one full-time staff member or volunteer running day-to-day operations.

This grant program was born out of a desire to invest in smaller organizations in the City of Trenton that were having sizable impact and were primed to grow and scale. The additional supports offered by The Smith Family Foundation are intended to increase the capacity of the organizations which would lead to increased annual operating budgets, increased staff sizes, and the ability to accept more clients into their programs.





## Section III.

Many foundations prioritize organizations that have larger operating budgets, experienced and seasoned leadership, and staff sizes that allow for widespread impact. Although The Smith Family Foundation also supports similar organizations that have a history of offering support in the Trenton community, they also recognize that smaller organizations can sometimes reach deeper into the pockets of poverty through their on-the-ground presence. By prioritizing smaller organizations with the *Forever Forward Fellowship*, SFFNJ is committing to lifting up new ideas and sourcing partners and networks that can support the expansion of innovation.

Supporting smaller organizations with the *Forever Forward Fellowship* also means that SFFNJ will be presented with challenges. Oftentimes, these organizations are understaffed, require support and ongoing development of their governing structures, and lack the philanthropic relationships required to capitalize their ideas. The Smith Family Foundation does not shy away from this work; they lean in. The foundation is committed to uplifting grassroots organizations in the City of Trenton that have the potential to truly meet people where they are and fill needs and gaps that have been long-standing.

With this first cohort, the foundation learned a great deal about the importance of relationships, their development, and more importantly, their stewardship. Relationships are the key to success for all nonprofits, and opening pathways to access for grassroots partners has been identified as a priority for SFFNJ. In addition, the foundation has learned how to best support grassroots organizations in their attempts at scaling and increasing their impact. It is anticipated that with every cohort, the Smith Family Foundation will continue to learn and evolve for the betterment of the *Forever Forward Fellowship*, but more importantly, for organizations serving the great City of Trenton



# Section IV. HomeWorks



HomeWorks is committed to Trenton's youth, providing academic support, social-emotional learning, and a physical space for Black and Brown girls to grow and succeed. As a residential program, HomeWorks provides its scholars with meals, transportation, tutoring, mental health resources and counseling, and supplemental programming, such as coding, horseback riding, social justice learning, dance, theater, college tours, and more. HomeWorks's vision is a future with communities of young women around the world breaking down educational and gender barriers to social justice.

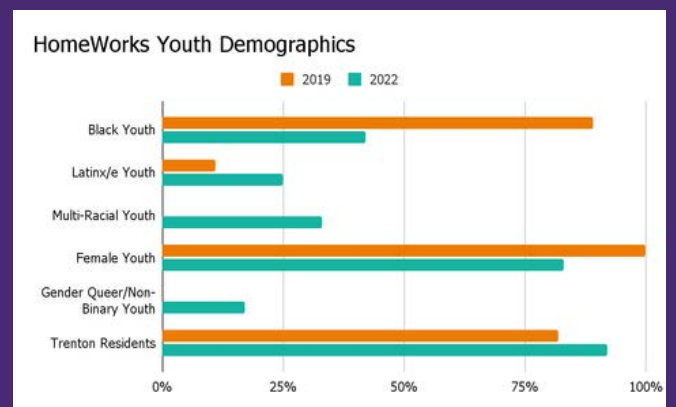
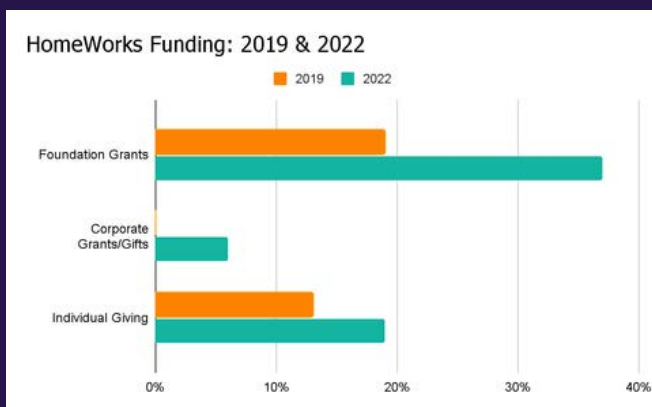


## Section IV.

As a *Forever Forward Fellow*, HomeWorks received multi-year funding to implement professional and leadership development processes and bolster their programming to further its impact.

Since receiving funding in 2020, HomeWorks has:

- Increased its average staff salary from \$30,000/year to \$46,788/year;
- Increased its Executive Director salary from \$30,000/year to \$40,000/year;
- Doubled its staff size (from 4 to 8);
- Increased its Board size from 5 to 8, with active and functioning Board committees;
- Increased its physical space from 3,000 square feet to 10,800 square feet, by purchasing a headquarters;
- Diversified its funding streams;
- Launched its “Road to College” Program;
- Diversified its youth cohort;
- Implemented trauma-informed practices into programming and hired an in-house therapist to provide group, individual, and family counseling;
- Expanded staff-wide professional development to include ACEs training;
- Increased its strategic partnerships;
- Diversified external communications and increased its media hits; and
- Increased its student retention rate from 27% to 100%!



# Section V. HelpSelf



Founded in 2002 to transform families by providing them with educational, nutritional, and emotional support, HelpSelf hosts programming for Trenton families that promotes social-emotional learning, intellectual growth, and healthy lifestyles.



## Section V.

As a *Forever Forward Fellow*, HelpSelf received multi-year funding to expand their programming and implement organizational best practices, which has bolstered the organization's sustainability and impact in the City of Trenton.

Since receiving funding in 2020, HelpSelf has:

Increased its Executive Director salary from \$26,000 to \$46,000;

Doubled its staff (from 4 to 8);

Engaged in professional development opportunities, including budgeting and planning, management and supervision, team building, and enhancing workplace culture;

Filled all Board positions and ensured that it met regularly;

Diversified its funding streams and organizational budget;

Created paid volunteer opportunities for youth who have aged out of their regular programming;

Increased its programmatic impact;

Quadrupled program engagement from 35 to 125 youth;

Diversified the youth served;

Strengthened social-emotional learning opportunities for staff and program participants, including health and safety, child abuse prevention, classroom management, and enrichment activities;

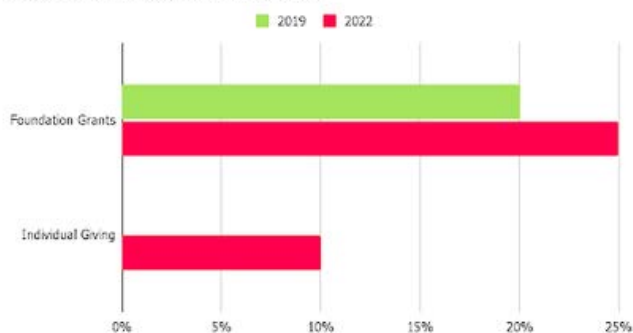
Expanded their external communications to include a radio and online presence;

Implemented creative activities into their curriculum;

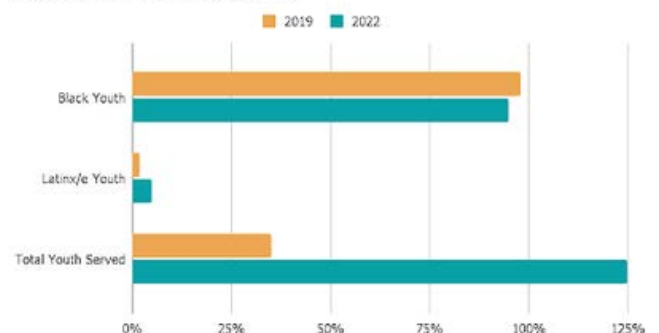
Implemented program evaluation practices, and;

Created additional staff positions to accommodate changes in programming!

HelpSelf's Funding: 2019 & 2022



HelpSelf Youth Demographics







# Section VI. Forever Forward Fellowship Analysis

Over the last three years, the Smith Family Foundation has been documenting all of the wraparound and programmatic implementation that was associated with the *Forever Forward Fellowship*. As a result, they are able to share their learnings transparently. The first of which is that not every organization that is initially accepted into the program will successfully make it through the three-year grant cycle.

The *Forever Forward Fellowship* has required participation in development, networking, and programmatic analysis. All of these require ongoing capacity and commitment to continued participation and willingness to amend and shift priorities as knowledge grows.

The *Forever Forward Fellowship* accepted three grantees into the first cohort. You will note that this report has only highlighted two of those organizations. That is because the third organization was unable to meet grant requirements due to limited capacity. This resulted in an unexpected opportunity for both parties; to SFFNJ as an evolving and learning grantor, and to the grantee as an organization with a growth trajectory. This served as an opportunity to have honest dialogue leading to decisions that were best for the foundation. They listened. They adapted. They learned.

Although the foundation was not able to successfully support all three organizations to the completion of the *Forever Forward Fellowship*, they still consider that the grant program was a success. All grantees, including the third, received funding to bolster critical programming and professional development opportunities that enhanced leadership, and they gained access to resources that changed the way they tracked their programmatic outputs and outcomes. Through the challenges SFFNJ faced in the deployment of this program, they are better prepared to take on their next cohort. These learnings are not only for SFFNJ, but for other foundations who are looking to support grassroots organizations, particularly those led by people of color. The multitude of issues faced by community-led grassroots organizations is clear, and the foundation feels that they were able to cut through systemic challenges to offer support and true partnership.

## Section VI.

The *Forever Forward Fellowship's* unrestricted funding allowed the organizations to advance financially and programmatically. In order to do so, a key requirement of the *Forever Forward Fellowship* is that three key stakeholders, including Executive Directors, from each organization are required to participate in every Transformational Leadership Development Program session. Because SFFNJ is committed to the long-term success of the organization, the foundation wants to ensure that the grantees would have the infrastructure and development they need to continue serving Trenton should the Executive Director move on.

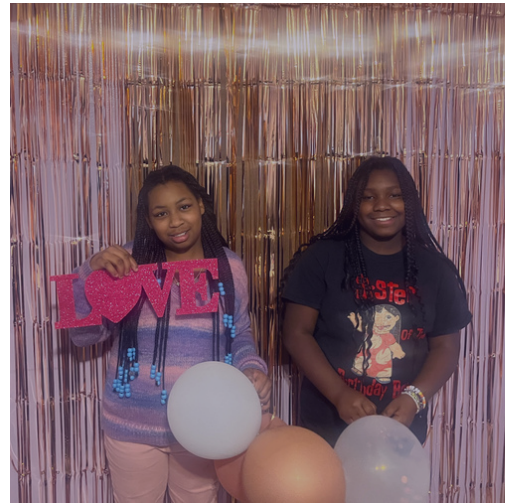
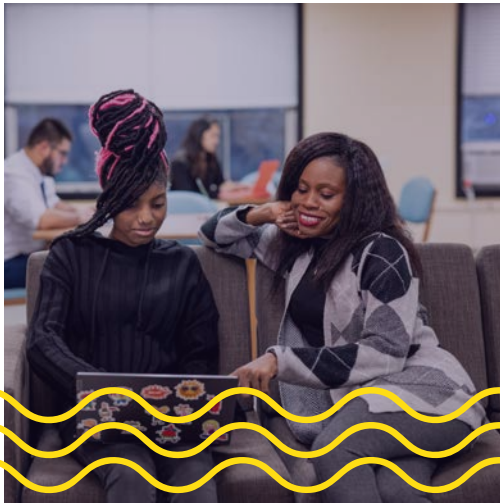
Throughout the three-year program, organizations received in-depth training feedback by some of the nonprofit sector's most experienced experts in our region. These trainings included development where grantees learned about grant writing, program evaluation, and metrics gathering. This allowed them to fine-tune their operations and increase their operating budget size year over year. It also allowed them to prioritize and be knowledgeable about the board and staff relationship that is necessary for good governance. This was made possible through board development and relationship stewardship. They also received support to build positive, inclusive, and welcoming workplace cultures focusing on internal and external messaging. Additionally, the Executive Directors received three years of executive coaching to enhance their leadership and managerial skills increasing their knowledge and experience for implementing best practices.



The grant allowed them to fund both existing operations and programming, affording them the opportunity to think about new ways to implement their work and to plan beyond the current budget cycle into the future. Over time, unrestricted and multi-year funding allowed them to expand their programmatic offerings, which in turn gave them the ability to serve more youth, increase retention rates, grow their operations, and improve impact.

## Section VI.

Overall, the Smith Family Foundation feels strongly that the *Forever Forward Fellowship* had a meaningful impact that can be scaled and replicated. The foundation is committed to advancing this work in the City of Trenton. SFFNJ welcomes their philanthropic partners nearby and across the nation to join them locally and replicate their work nationally. The foundation truly believes that by supporting smaller organizations, they will create a more meaningful and lasting impact in their community. The foundation welcomes the opportunity to share their learnings and to expand their networks for the betterment of the City of Trenton.



Prepared by







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