

live
YOUR
dream 
education & training awards for women[®]



Club Participation Toolkit

A SOROPTIMIST RESOURCE FOR CLUBS & MEMBERS

Welcome to the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards!*

I was able to recognize my own hard work and to recognize the goals again by writing what I actually have achieved in my essay. In addition, I was able to feel the joy and pride of being recognized for receiving the award. The fact that I work hard and am fulfilling my dreams with my goals is a good influence for my children.—Japanese Award Recipient

Knowing that this group of ladies had chosen me and believed that I could succeed was the extra boost that I needed at times. Choosing to squeeze classes into my already busy schedule was a challenge. Soroptimist had invested in me; I was not going to fail them...or myself! I have always believed in myself, however, one can never underestimate the empowerment that comes from someone else believing in you too!—US Award Recipient

The Live Your Dream Award helped me be a role model to my kids showing them that you can change your path at any age if you set your mind to it. My oldest daughter is going off to college this fall. I hope to help her get on her feet and become an independent young woman herself. For the last few years I finally feel at peace with where I am in life.—Canadian Award Recipient

These three women were given a boost on their path to live their dreams with the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. After economic and other barriers to their success, they moved confidently in the direction of their dreams with the support of their local Soroptimist club. Your club's participation in the *Live Your Dream Awards* is a terrific way to make a BIG difference in the lives of women—and their families. Although the awards address economic need and make a difference in a practical way, we know that they also affect women in a personal way. Women who have received the award report an increase in self-esteem and pride at being recognized for having the courage to change their lives. This program is the cornerstone of our efforts to increase public awareness and international name recognition for Soroptimist. Increasing name recognition of Soroptimist by linking it to a program as meaningful and valuable as the *Live Your Dream Awards* will help us achieve our mission, recruit and retain members, raise our public profile, and attract additional financial support. This is critical for our organization's growth and development. The *Live Your Dream Awards* are also a key part of our strategy to achieve our 2021-2031 Big Goal: to invest in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education, leading to economic empowerment. And your club is a crucial part of achieving that Big Goal!

This toolkit contains all the information you need to make your club program a success. The next page contains a table of contents to help you easily access the information you need!

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IMPORTANT DEADLINES AND CHECKLIST

Important Deadlines

NOVEMBER 15	Application deadline for club applicants
FEBRUARY 1	Reporting deadline for clubs in regions that have district judging
FEBRUARY 15	Reporting deadline for clubs in regions that do not have district judging
MARCH 15	Deadline for regions to report to SIA headquarters

Checklist of Program Activities

April-May	Appoint a Club Chair and recruit club volunteers – create a <i>Live Your Dream Awards committee!</i>
June	Update your club roster with the new Club Chair contact information (request your Club President or Treasurer make this update if you do not have access to the online club roster)
July-October (and year around!)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalize applications and recruiting materials for distribution Download other <i>Live Your Dream Awards</i> materials from the SIA website Recruit applicants by contacting local organizations, distributing applications, and sharing the application link on social media <i>Access online application system as needed (Clubs in the US/Canada only)</i>
November-December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather applications by the November 15 Applicant Deadline and check for eligibility Schedule your club judging and send out invitations
December-January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold your club judging and select a recipient Contact ALL women about the status of their application Confirm mailing information BEFORE sending award funds to an applicant
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If applicable, submit club top recipient for district-level judging via the online reporting form by the February 1 deadline <p><i>(Please contact your region chair if you are not sure if your region has district-level judging and to find out your region's district-level judging procedure)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If applicable, submit club top recipient for region-level judging via the online reporting form by the February 15 deadline <p><i>Once your club's decision has been made and reported, make a plan to send the award funds to the recipient. Remember her financial need and prioritize getting her the money. You can still honor her at a later date.</i></p>
March (or earlier!)	Honor your club recipient by holding and publicizing an awards event

CLUB CHAIR POSITION DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- Sign a confidentiality agreement and keep it in your club records (ensure anyone else who reads applications also signs an agreement, including external judges).
- Review the *Live Your Dream Awards* club toolkit and ensure you're familiar with the program guidelines.
- Make sure that you are designated the *Live Your Dream Awards* club chair on your club roster.
 - US/Canada: Login to your online application system account. If you need assistance with this, please email us at lydwards@soroptimist.org. Review the [training videos](#), so you are familiar with using the online application system
- Recruit committee members – these women can support you in this role. It's a big job and you don't have to do it alone!
- Recruit applicants—meet with local organizations to host application workshops, distribute applications, and answer questions.
- Share information on social media or local newspapers about the application.
- Review applications for eligibility as you receive them and follow up with applicants who have incomplete applications.
- Schedule your club judging and find external judges (ensure they sign a confidentiality agreement!)
- Host club judging and select award recipients.
 - US/Canada: Indicate your club's decision on the online application system.
- Communicate with ALL applicants about their award status.
 - US/Canada: you can do this through the online application system using the optional emails in the Indicate Your Club's Decision stage.
- Ensure that award recipients receive and are able to deposit their award money in a timely manner.
- Report your club's participation to SIAHQ via the [online reporting form](#) by the appropriate deadline.

Suggested Skillsets for Club Chairs

- Enthusiasm for and knowledge of the *Live Your Dream Awards*
- Time and capacity to administer the program
- Comfortable using email to communicate and able to use the internet to report the club's participation
 - *If you are not comfortable with technology, we recommend choosing a club chair who is, or partnering with another club member to assist you.
- Compassion for the applicants and their situations
- Skilled at promoting the Award to possible organizations or applicants
- US/Canada: comfortable using the online application system and reaching out for assistance when needed

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can my club get applications?

The *Live Your Dream Awards* application (including reference form) is [available online](#) as an easy-to-use writeable PDF form in all federation languages. In the US and Canada, clubs can share the link to the online application system for women to connect to your club and create an application.

***Please be sure to use the most up to date [application on our website](#) each year!**

How can new clubs get started?

Clubs new to the awards program should read this toolkit thoroughly and ask their region chair any questions. All newly chartered clubs in the federation will receive an email from SIA with information about new club funding, through which they can receive \$1,000 to fund their first *Live Your Dream Award*. New clubs must submit an online form with an eligible application to receive this funding. Please email LYDAwards@soroptimist.org for more information.

What should we do if we do not receive any qualified applications?

If this happens, contact your region chair, as well as SIA Headquarters at lydwards@soroptimist.org. SIA Headquarters receives hundreds of applications from women who are located over 75 miles from a club and will be happy to share a few!. A second option is to contact other clubs in your area to see if they have applications they can share. Your region chair can help facilitate this process, as she is likely to know of clubs with extra applications.

When and where do we submit our recipient for the next level of judging?

For clubs with district judging, the deadline for submission to the district is February 1. Please contact your region chair to confirm if your region has district judging and what the process for reporting your recipient to the district chair.

For those clubs in regions without districts, the deadline is February 15.

For information about where to send your applications, please look up your region chair on your member portal or contact lydwards@soroptimist.org.

What are the eligibility requirements for the *Live Your Dream Awards*?

For a full list of the *Live Your Dream Awards* eligibility requirements please refer to the [Eligibility Checklist](#).

What kinds of educational programs are eligible for the *Live Your Dream Awards*?

Any type of education or training that will help a woman improve her standard of living are eligible including:

- High school equivalency/G.E.D.
- Undergraduate degree (including a bachelor's degree, associate's degree, second bachelor's degree, or online programs)
- Certificates/coursework for career advancement
- Vocational/technical training programs

Graduate degrees (Master's, JD, MD, or PhD) programs are **NOT** eligible for the *Live Your Dream Awards*. Women who already have a graduate degree (Master's, JD, MD, or PhD) are also **NOT** eligible for the *Live Your Dream Awards*.

Is a woman still eligible to receive an award if she receives financial assistance or lives in someone else's home?

The *Live Your Dream Awards* provide resources so women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support, or live in subsidized housing/in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program. As long as she is still the primary financial provider to herself and her dependent(s), she is still eligible.

What do we mean by primary financial provider and how do we know the applicant meets that requirement?

The applicant must consider herself the primary financial provider for her and her dependent(s), meaning that she holds the primary financial responsibility of meeting their needs. She may have a spouse/partner or other family member who has an income, but her income must be higher than the other person. Her income may include child support, government assistance, scholarships, loans, etc. Please use your best judgement when reviewing the budget section. If the situation is unclear, the best way to determine if the applicant is eligible is to contact the applicant and clarify her financial role. Her income may include multiple forms of income other than employment.

Can applicants use Artificial Intelligence (AI) for their written section?

When applicants sign their application, they agree that they wrote their application without the use of artificial intelligence and that all essays are their own writing (second bullet in Part V. Agreement section of the application).

If you suspect an essay may have been generated by artificial intelligence, look for the following signs:

- Overly formal language that does not match the tone in other communications or essays
- Extremely vague responses without any personal details
- Inconsistencies between the essays or the essays and other parts of the application (for example, a mismatch in desired career goals, education program, or major)
- Anything where there is information in brackets, such as [Applicant's Name] or [College's Name]

Due to a huge influx of AI-written responses, we encourage all reviewers to review the written sections and make sure that the responses contain the applicants own writing. If you see signs of AI, please send the application back for verification, and request that the applicant resubmit their written section in their own words in order to be considered in the judging process. Assistive technology used by disabled applicants to write their essay in their own words is fine, but we want all essays to be written in the applicants' own voice.

What constitutes club participation in the Live Your Dream Awards program?

For a club to be counted as participating in the *Live Your Dream Awards* program, the club must give a cash award to a minimum of one eligible woman and then forward her application for district or region-level judging.

Why do we need our Live Your Dream Awards recipient to sign a media consent form?

Many clubs and regions create a news release to further honor their recipient, or use their recipient's story on their website or social media to advertise the award to future potential applicants. In order to use your recipient's name and story, you will need her to sign a [media consent form](#) first. Some recipients may not be comfortable with having their personal story shared and will choose to not sign the form. In these cases, clubs must honor the recipient's confidentiality. There are options on the form that allow the recipient to select how much information she feels comfortable sharing, and your club is required to respect those choices.

Can we give the funding directly to the recipient's school on her behalf?

The *Live Your Dream Awards* is a unique program because we trust women to use the award in the way that is best for them, whether that's paying for tuition, books, transportation, childcare, or another expense. Clubs should only send funding to the school upon the request of the recipient and should keep documentation of this request.

ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (US/CANADA CLUBS ONLY)

What is the *Live Your Dream Awards* online application system?

A streamlined, contemporary way for women to apply to your club. Instead of writable PDFs, a woman completes her application online - eliminating blank fields, incomplete questions, and missing references. It's important to note that the application questions are exactly the same as years past! The online application system is simply a new method for women to apply.

The applicant must complete an eligibility checklist first. If she is eligible, then she will be able to access the full application. Club chairs will still need to review the application for eligibility.

Why did SIA Headquarters create the online application system?

For years SIA Headquarters has heard that clubs want an easier way to manage their *Live Your Dream Awards* applications. The PDFs aren't cutting it—blank text fields, incomplete questions, no references—these issues make more work for everyone. The online application system eliminates these issues and makes the program more accessible, providing women with an easy method of submitting an application to a local club. In today's digital world, many school programs, grants, and scholarships offer online applications—we joined those ranks!

What countries have access to the online application system?

Currently it is available in just the US and Canada, but we plan to expand to all of our member countries.

Will this affect how our club distributes or accepts applications?

Yes, but in the best way! Instead of emailing, printing, and/or distributing the writable PDF applications, all your club needs to do is share the [link](#) (or [this flyer](#) with the link) to the online application system. Women will select a club using their zip code. If they select your club, your club chair get an email when the application has been submitted. We suggest you share [this link](#) on your social media, with community organizations, and directly to applicants, including instructions for applicants to submit to your specific club. Please provide your club name, so they know which club to select.

How will I know if a woman applies to our club on the online application system?

If you are the *Live Your Dream Awards* chair for your club, you will receive an email notification when a woman submits her application to your club on the online application system. Please do not share your password with others.

Does SIA Headquarters review the applications on the online application system?

No. When a woman applies through the online application system, her application is directly connected to a local club of her choosing. Each club is then responsible for reviewing their applications from women in their area.

Can women and clubs still use the writable PDF applications?

Yes, if absolutely necessary. We highly encourage all clubs to direct applicants to the online application system. This will help ensure you receive complete applications, and all your applications are in one place. However, if a woman does not have any access to the internet to apply online, the writable PDF application is still available for you to download and print [here](#).

What if our club has not received any eligible applications from women in our community?

Contact your region chair or other clubs in your area to see if they have applications they can share. Another option is to contact SIA Headquarters at lydawards@soroptimist.org – SIA Headquarters receives applications from women who do not live near a Soroptimist club and would be happy to share some with you!

Request applications by submitting a [Non-local Application Request form](#).

For more resources about the online application system, visit the [SIA website here](#).

HOW TO: RECRUIT APPLICANTS

Raise awareness of the award and recruit applicants!

The key to successful recruitment is to identify eligible women and make your community aware of the *Live Your Dream Awards*.

Determine an Award Amount

Clubs should determine how much to give their *Live Your Dream Award* recipient(s) according to their fundraising efforts, the number of awards they are giving, as well as the costs of education and living in their particular community. Participating clubs give an average of US \$1,000 per recipient. A large cash award may make it easier to attract applicants. Although we do want to reach more women, we also want to ensure that the award is sufficient enough to make an impact!

Remember the Eligibility Requirements

Use the requirements to help identify where to find eligible women in your community.

Eligible women:

- Provide the primary financial support* for themselves and their dependents. Dependents can include children, partner, siblings, and/or parents.
- Have financial need.**
- Are enrolled in or have been accepted to a high school equivalency, vocational, technical, or undergraduate degree program.
- Are motivated to achieve their education and career goals.
- Reside in one of Soroptimist International of the Americas' member countries/territories (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela).
- Have not previously been the recipient of a Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award or *Live Your Dream Award*.
- Do not have a graduate degree and are not pursuing a graduate degree.
- Are not a Soroptimist member, an employee of Soroptimist International of the Americas, or immediate family of either. Immediate family is defined to include spouse/partner, parents, siblings, children, or grandchildren by adoption, blood, or marriage.

*Note: Receiving government support, child support, living in subsidized housing or in someone else's home do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

**Note: We do not define financial need or provide an income threshold because the cost of living varies so greatly throughout our countries and territories, and individual financial situations and needs also vary widely. Please use the budget section of the application to determine the financial need of each individual applicant.

Make Use of the Writeable/Emailable Application

Using the writeable/emailable [application form](#) and [references](#) (or link to the online application system in the US and Canada) will greatly facilitate this process as clubs can email applications to partner organizations or directly to individual applicants.

***Please be sure to use the most up to date [application on our website](#) each year!**

Please note: applicants are now required to only have one reference (they can still submit two, but the second one is optional!).

Publicize the Award

Have applications and information available during club projects where appropriate, such as health screenings, computer centers, or during mentoring activities.

Contact the following organizations about distributing applications, hanging posters, and assisting your club in reaching women who need assistance.

- vocational or training schools
- community colleges or universities
- places of worship
- community/recreation centers
- charitable organizations, especially those working with women and low-income persons
- homeless shelters and transitional housing programs
- domestic violence shelters
- food banks
- government public assistance offices
- women's health centers
- childcare or daycare facilities
- welfare-to-work programs
- clinics that provide free medical services to low-income persons
- employment agencies
- local job/career fairs
- addiction recovery and rehab centers

RECRUITING TIPS

Work with Local Schools

Many community colleges, universities, and vocational/trade schools offer financial aid workshops that include information about local scholarships and awards. Contact the financial aid offices of nearby institutions to ask if the *Live Your Dream Awards* can be included. Also, many colleges and universities have women's centers to assist women throughout their education. Contact these centers for assistance in finding eligible women. Offer to email the application or online application system link (*US and Canada only*) and ask that they forward it to eligible women.

Make a Personal Contact

Clubs have reported they have the most success receiving completed applications when they have a personal contact at the organizations where they are recruiting. Do not just email, mail, or drop off applications and expect to receive a response. Talk to someone within the organization and explain the benefits of the program. To assist with these efforts, please refer to the [sample recruiting letter](#) of introduction to a local community organization.

Assist Women with Their Applications

The women targeted by this award are usually going to school, raising children, and working. They may be very busy and may need reminders about deadlines. Furthermore, they may find the application intimidating. This could be the first time they are applying for an award. We also hear that women do not feel they are worthy of the award. Helping applicants understand the award process can dispel this thinking.

Consider holding a workshop to discuss the application process and have club members available to offer one-on-one assistance. Conducting a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* application workshop is an excellent way for your club to identify eligible women in your community and provide them with the support they need to complete the application process. To assist clubs in conducting an application workshop, check out [Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards: Achieving Success Through Application Workshops](#).

Expand the Search to Surrounding Areas

If you live in a particularly small area and are having difficulty finding applicants, expand your search to surrounding communities that do not have Soroptimist clubs. Contacting organizations, distributing applications, and receiving completed applications can all be handled by email, mail, or telephone.

Applications from SIA Headquarters

If your club has not received any eligible applications, contact SIA Headquarters to ask for complete and eligible applications that can be forwarded to your club.

Request applications by submitting a [Non-local Application Request form](#).

Working with Other Local Soroptimist Clubs

Some Soroptimist clubs share their completed applications as a way to honor as many eligible women as possible. Each club gives an award to a different woman. Your region chair can help facilitate this.

Work with Previous Award Recipients

Previous *Live Your Dream Award* recipients have expressed a desire to promote the award by speaking to other local organizations, at schools, community centers, and health centers. Additionally, they were interested in connecting with the media about their experience and holding workshops for applicants. Utilizing enthusiastic women who have received the award to promote the *Live Your Dream Awards* can bolster recruitment.

SAMPLE RECRUITING LETTER

Clubs may use the sample recruiting letter when emailing applications and reference forms to partner organizations.

NOTE: before emailing these materials, type your club's contact information into the writeable application form so that applicants will be able to complete the application online and email the completed forms directly to your club.

September X, 20XX

[INSERT NAME AND POSITION]

[INSERT ORGANIZATION]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear [INSERT NAME],

Michelle, 32, is a single mother of two children. Michelle got pregnant during her senior year of high school and never fulfilled her plans to attend college. Two years ago, she lost her job at a local bank when the branch was forced to close. Because she had no formal training, certifications, or degrees, getting a new job wasn't easy. Michelle had to work two low-paying jobs just to have enough money for the essentials. She knew that there was only one thing she could do to change her life—go to college.

Luckily, Michelle was one of over 2,000 women who received a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* last year. The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* are cash awards given to motivated women who are the primary financial supporters of their families. The recipients of the award seek to improve their lives by gaining additional skills, training, or education, but do not have the resources to do so. These cash awards are meant to offset any costs associated with the recipient's efforts to attain higher education, including tuition, books, supplies, childcare, or transportation costs.

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* is the signature project of Soroptimist International of the Americas. Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME] is one of over 1,200 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

The most challenging aspect of this program is getting applications into the hands of eligible women. Please find attached an emailable Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* application and an emailable reference form. Please forward these materials to any women you know who strive to attain higher education in the hopes of better supporting themselves and their families. We have included our club's contact information in the materials so that applicants may submit the applications directly to us. We hope that you can take a moment out of your busy day to help a deserving woman in your community by forwarding her this information.

Thank you for your time and support. I will call you next week to discuss the program and how we can work together to find potential applicants.

Sincerely,

[INSERT CLUB CHAIR'S NAME]

Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* Chair

Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]

APPLICATION WORKSHOPS

Introduction

Each year, the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* helps over 2,000 women live their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. However, there are countless more women who miss the opportunity to receive an award because they feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the application process. They don't believe they are capable of completing the application, let alone receiving an award.

Conducting a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* application workshop is an excellent way for your club to identify eligible women in your community and provide them with the support they need to complete the application. As a result, not only will your club help increase the confidence and self-esteem of the women applying, you will also end up with more award applications from eligible applicants. Conducting an award application workshop will serve as an especially helpful tool for clubs struggling to find eligible women to apply for the award.

If your club is in the vicinity of other Soroptimist clubs, consider creating a multi-club collective to co-host a workshop. This provides more members to help plan and implement the workshop and allows for pooling and sharing of applications to ensure that all clubs in your area receive eligible applications. If you co-host a workshop, divide the applications among all clubs so that each club has different applications to judge.

Also, when distributing applications to women who will not be attending the workshop, make sure to let them know you are available to assist with the application process should they have any questions. This will help ensure that all applicants have equal access to assistance. It can also help ensure that the budget section is completed correctly, and the applications have strong written sections.

Guidelines for Conducting an Application Workshop

Identify and Meet with Partner Organization(s)

The first step in conducting an application workshop is to identify your partner organization(s). Partnering with a local college, university, vocational/skills training program and/or women's organization—such as a domestic violence shelter or women's homeless shelter—is a great way to identify eligible women and potential applicants.

Once you have identified your partner organization(s), set up an informational meeting with the point person for the organization. Use the meeting to introduce Soroptimist and the *Live Your Dream Awards* program. The goal of the meeting is to secure an agreement between your club and the partner organization(s) to conduct a *Live Your Dream Awards* application workshop on-site—either on the campus of your partner school or at the site of a partner organization—and to enlist your point person(s) in helping you to advertise the workshop and identify eligible applicants.

Try to secure a room with computers. This will allow participants to use the [writeable/emailable application form](#) or [online application system](#). If this is not possible, conduct the workshop using paper applications. Also, try to include space for childcare. For some women, this will be necessary in order for them to attend the workshop.

Advertise the Workshop

When advertising the workshop, it is important to consider an ideal number of participants. You don't want to advertise it so widely that you get more applicants than you can assist. Likewise, it is important to state the award eligibility requirements clearly. Be strategic and work with your partner organization to advertise to and recruit only women known to be eligible for the award.

To help advertise the award, distribute the [Live Your Dream Awards Poster](#) at strategic places at your partner organization(s) and/or email it directly to potential workshop participants. When women contact the club for more information, you can pre-screen for eligibility.

Recruit Workshop Volunteers

Once you have an idea of how many women will attend the workshop, begin recruiting club members to serve as workshop volunteers. Ideally, there should be no more than three applicants per Soroptimist volunteer – the more one-on-one and personalized attention that can be given to workshop participants the more successful and rewarding the workshop will be. Also recruit members who are interested in providing child-care services during the workshop.

To ensure workshop volunteers are sufficiently knowledgeable, consider holding a training session to walk club members through the application process – explaining each section of the application and providing sufficient time for questions. Give volunteers a heads-up that when applicants work on their personal essay some women may become emotional and/or tearful, so make a plan to best provide a safe, supportive environment for these women.

Conduct the Workshop

Allow two hours for the workshop. This will give participants plenty of time to receive one-on-one attention and to complete their portion of the application. Make sure to bring extra applications in case a participant needs to start over. To keep energy levels up, schedule in a short break if needed. Also, provide a sign-in sheet for participants for post-workshop follow-up.

Introductions and Ice Breaker

Begin the workshop with a brief introduction to Soroptimist. The [Who We Are](#) page of the SIA website provides a concise summary of Soroptimist including the mission, vision, and core values of the organization. Then allow time for both workshop volunteers and participants to introduce themselves. Use an ice breaker to help participants relax, such as asking everyone to share what they are studying and why. Next, provide a summary of the program, including a brief explanation of the various award levels. Disclose how many club awards will be given, the cash amount, and when award recipients should expect to be notified.

Overview of Application

After the introductions, provide an overview of the application section-by-section and line-by-line— allowing participants to ask questions during each section. Let participants know there will be time to work on the application following the overview. Some things to note in each section:

Part I: Basic Information

- Confirm all workshop participants have dependents that rely on their financial support.

Part II: Education and Career Goals

- Instruct applicants to clearly describe the connections between their educational pursuits and their career goals.

Part III: Financial Information

- Emphasize the need to be as accurate as possible—eligible applicants must demonstrate financial need.
- The most [updated application](#) will do the math for her and populate an annual total.
- Applicants can choose whether they would like to report their annual or monthly finances. Utilize the [Annual Budget Tips Worksheet](#) and [Monthly Budget Tips Worksheet](#) to assist applicants complete this section.

Part IV: Personal Statement

- Encourage applicants to be as honest as possible and provide as much detail as they are comfortable sharing.
- Remind applicants that written sections using Artificial Intelligence will not be accepted and to make sure their responses contain their own writing and are in their own words. Assistive technology for applicants with disabilities is allowed, but written sections should be in their own words.
- Assure applicants that their personal statement will remain confidential—only local Soroptimist club members and award judges will have access to their application. Should they receive an award, their information will be shared only if consent is granted.

References

- Be prepared to help applicants brainstorm potential references.
- Role-play a scenario of an applicant asking someone to provide a reference.
- Provide a sample email for applicants to send to their references.

Use the *Live Your Dream Award* application workshop template to help get you started or create your own using these photos.

Fill Out and Collect Applications

Following the application overview, allow ample time for participants to fill out an application. The majority of the workshop should be allocated for actually working on the application. Make sure each participant receives one-on-one attention and instruction. This is arguably the most important part of the workshop and key to assuring your club receives completed applications.

At the end of the workshop, collect the completed applications. Make sure to give participants the application deadline and club contact information, so they know where to submit their reference(s) or application if they were unable to complete it during the workshop. Also, be sure to let them know when the award judging will take place and when they should expect to be notified. If participants used computers to fill out the writeable form but did not finish, make sure to help them save the document so that they may continue working on it later.

Remember to thank participants for their attendance and consider providing a small gift or incentive, like a gift card. *Make sure participants understand that attending the workshop does not ensure they will become award recipients: not all workshop participants will become award recipients.* However, you can encourage participants to reapply the following year if they are not selected.

Post-Workshop Follow-Up

Check-in with participants as the application deadline approaches to remind them to submit their application and/or reference(s). Once your club has selected the club-level award recipient(s), send a letter to all participants who were not selected (see these [sample letter templates](#)). Thank them again for their participation in the workshop and encourage them to reapply next year.

Conclusion

Conducting an application workshop is a proven way to identify eligible applicants and provide them with the support and encouragement they need to apply. As a result, not only will this increase the number of applications your club receives, but you will have helped to increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of workshop participants. Participants will leave the workshop having made new friends and will know that they are not alone. They will leave knowing that Soroptimists believe in them—and that, regardless of whether they receive an award, they are capable of achieving their dreams of a better life for themselves and their family.

BUDGET TIPS WORKSHEET

Share this worksheet with applicants to help them complete this section of their application.

Click here for the downloadable PDF versions to share with applicants:

- [Annual Budget Tips Worksheet](#)
- [Monthly Budget Tips Worksheet](#)

ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Soroptimist International of _____

Live Your Dream Awards contact: _____

Contact information: _____

The *Live Your Dream Awards* was established in 1972 to assist women with primary financial responsibility for their families to obtain the skills-training and education necessary to improve their employment status and standard of living for themselves and their family. Each year, over \$2.8 million is awarded to more than 2,000 women in Soroptimist's member countries and territories. The women receiving these financial awards may use them for any costs associated with their educational efforts, including tuition, books, childcare, and transportation.

If you are interested in applying for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards, we strongly encourage you to complete this brief checklist in order to determine whether you are eligible for the award.

Please check all that apply:

- I provide the primary financial support for myself *and* my dependent(s), including at least one of the following:
 - child
 - spouse/partner
 - parent
 - sibling
 - other dependent
- I am enrolled in or have been accepted to a high school equivalency, a vocational/skills training program, or an undergraduate degree program.
- I do not have a graduate degree and am not currently enrolled in a graduate degree program.
- I reside in one of Soroptimist International of the Americas' member countries/territories (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela).
- I have not previously been the recipient of a *Live Your Dream Award* (previously the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award).
- I am not a Soroptimist member, an employee of Soroptimist International of the Americas, or immediate family of either (immediate family is defined to include spouse/partner, parents, siblings, grandchildren, or children by adoption, blood, or marriage).
- I am willing to describe my educational and career goals in my own writing without the use of artificial intelligence to write my written statement (300 words max).
- I am willing to describe why I deserve to receive the award in my own writing without the use of artificial intelligence to write my written statement (750 words max).
- I am in financial need and am prepared to list my family's annual living expenses and income.
- I am prepared to list my annual educational expenses.
- I am able to provide at least one written reference.

If you checked ALL of the above boxes, you are eligible to apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award.

In order to apply, you must [submit an official application and at least one completed reference form](#) by the application deadline, November 15.

Additionally, please note that the *Live Your Dream Awards* provide resources so women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support, or live in subsidized housing/in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. To learn more about Soroptimist and the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* online, please visit www.soroptimist.org.

HOW TO: SELECT RECIPIENTS

It's time to select your club's *Live Your Dream Award* recipient!

Review Applications

As you receive applications, review each one, checking to make sure it is complete, and that the applicant is eligible. **Anyone who has submitted an application that does not meet each of the eligibility requirements should not be included in the judging.**

If you receive an incomplete application, contact the applicant about receiving the remaining information. Check the following:

- Each question is answered.
- The application is signed.
- The applicant is a woman with **primary** financial responsibility* for herself and her dependents.
- The applicant demonstrates financial need.
- The applicant has been accepted or is enrolled and will still be attending high school equivalency, vocational, technical, or undergraduate degree program.
- The applicant does not hold a graduate degree.
- Application written sections were not written using Artificial Intelligence.

If anything is unclear on the application, be sure to mark the application as incomplete and request updates. You do not want to find out later that she was not eligible. Remember, if you have questions and don't have a clear picture of her situation, then so will your judges! The more detailed the application and the fuller picture you have of the applications situation will only make her application stronger in the judging process, so you are helping her by requesting updates!

Review our [Eligibility Processing Guidelines](#) to help walk you through how to assess an application's eligibility.

**Please note:* The *Live Your Dream Awards* provide resources so women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support or live in subsidized housing/in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

NOTE: More than one club member must be involved in the selection of the club award recipient.

Select Judges

Judges should be selected from outside the Soroptimist membership. This will provide an opportunity for judges to become community advocates for the program. Contact the women's groups, charitable organizations, and educational institutions that helped you to recruit applicants to ask their staff to serve as judges. Customize and use the sample judges' letter to help recruit judges. Appoint three to five judges to evaluate all qualifying applications.

Collect Confidentiality Agreements

The privacy of *Live Your Dream Awards* applicants is of critical importance. Since judges will come in contact with confidential information, each judge must complete a [Judges Confidentiality Agreement](#) and return it to you. A signed Confidentiality Agreement is required to participate as a judge. You should also collect a Confidentiality Agreement from any other Soroptimist club members who are helping administer the judging process. Clubs should store signed Confidentiality Agreements in a secure location for two years.

NOTE: To help ensure the confidentiality of the applicants, after in person judging is complete, collect all paper copies of applications, and ask online judges to delete any digital or paper copies of applications they may have.

Conduct the Judging

You may choose to hold your club awards judging in person or online:

In person: Choose a location, date, and time that is convenient for potential judges. Disperse the applications among the judges and provide the judges with the [judging sheet](#) to assist them in selecting a recipient who meets the program's guidelines. Compare the judges' scores and notes to determine your club award recipient.

Online: If you are concerned about or are unable to recruit judges due to scheduling difficulties, you may wish to conduct the judging online. Simply divide the applications among the judges, email the judges copies of the applications and [judging sheet](#), and ask that they return the completed judging sheets to you by a specified deadline. Compare the judges' scores and notes to select your club award recipient.

Check Recipient's References

Before notifying your recipient that she has been selected for an award, be sure to call her reference(s) to verify her eligibility. You may choose to contact reference(s) by phone or e-mail. If one method of communication does not work, please try the other.

Contacting a Reference by E-Mail

Refer to the reference's e-mail address at the bottom of the reference form. Send an e-mail to the reference based on this sample e-mail:

Subject: *Live Your Dream Awards Reference Check*

Body: Dear **[INSERT FIRST NAME]**,

I am from Soroptimist International of **[INSERT CLUB NAME]**, part of a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. We are giving out a *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award for Women* in our community. We received an application from **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]**, for whom you completed a reference, so I'm contacting you with a couple questions.

Would you please confirm that you did provide a reference on behalf of **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]** for a *Live Your Dream Award*?

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* are intended to increase access to education for hard-working, motivated women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families. Recipients have overcome significant obstacles and are now committed to improving their education, skills, and employment prospects in order to live their dreams. Do you support **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]** being considered for this award?

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,
[INSERT YOUR NAME]

Contacting a Reference by Phone

Refer to the reference's phone number at the bottom of the reference form. Call the reference using this sample phone script:

Hello! My name is **[INSERT YOUR NAME]** and I am from Soroptimist International of **[INSERT CLUB NAME]**, part of a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. We are giving out a *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award for Women* in our community. I'm calling because we received an application from **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]**, who you completed a reference for, so I'd like to ask you a couple questions.

Would you please confirm that you did provide a reference on behalf of **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]** for a *Live Your Dream Award*?

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* are intended to increase access to education for hard-working, motivated women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families. Recipients have overcome significant obstacles and are now committed to improving their education, skills, and employment prospects in order to live their dreams. Do you support **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]** being considered for this award?

Thank you. We will be in touch with **[INSERT APPLICANT'S NAME]** soon to let her know the status of her application.

Contact ALL Applicants

Once you have selected a recipient, it is important to alert not only her, but all **other applicants as well**. It is important for ALL applicants to be notified of the outcome of the judging. Furthermore, it is important to the reputation of the club and the organization that all applicants are contacted. Check out the [sample recipient letter](#) and the [sample non-recipient letter](#) for assistance! You may also wish to call your recipient – hearing the excitement in her voice is an extremely gratifying experience for club members!

Archive Applications

Each club is responsible for maintaining copies of the applications they receive. All applications should be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure location (such as a password protected online account like Dropbox). Applications of women who *did not receive an award* should be kept for one year, then destroyed by shredding or deleting the digital file. Applications of your *club recipients* should be kept for your club archives and maintained in a secure environment in perpetuity.

SAMPLE JUDGING INVITATION

This letter can be customized and used to help your club recruit *Live Your Dream Awards* judges.

November X, 20XX
[INSERT NAME]
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear [INSERT NAME],

We would like to invite you to join our panel of distinguished judges as we select **[INSERT NUMBER] club finalist(s)** for the *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards*. The *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* are cash awards designed to help women around the world reclaim their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families.

The cash awards give women the resources they need to improve their educational status and employment prospects. Since the *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* program began in 1972, more than \$40 million has been disbursed to help tens of thousands of women offset the costs associated with their educational efforts.

The program begins at the local level where Soroptimist clubs and regions provide cash awards to local women. Twenty-seven region recipients are then forwarded to Soroptimist headquarters in Philadelphia where three women are chosen as international finalists and awarded \$10,000 each.

We would be honored to have you help us select our club recipients. **Judging will take place on [INSERT DATE, TIME, LOCATION: X Day, Month X from x:xx a.m. to x:xx a.m. at local club meeting hall.]**

Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. The organization is particularly concerned with providing women and girls access to education, as this is the most effective path to self-determination.

We hope you will be able to join us for what promises to be an inspiring and rewarding morning.

Sincerely,

[INSERT CLUB CHAIR NAME]
Live Your Dream Awards Chair
Soroptimist International of **[INSERT CLUB NAME]**

JUDGES CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT



The privacy of our *Live Your Dream Awards* (“LYDA”) applicants is of critical importance to Soroptimist International of the Americas (“SIA”). As a judge, you will come into contact with confidential information while preparing and/or evaluating the LYDA applications. Such confidential information may include but is not limited to:

- Applicant name, and names and ages of family members
- Applicant address and other contact information
- Applicant personal details (including marital status, date of birth, personal history, family history, relationship history)
- Applicant financial information
- Applicant medical information
- Applicant educational information

This information is highly sensitive, and you are being provided with access to it for the sole purpose of evaluating the applicant’s eligibility for a LYDA. You must treat all information about every applicant as confidential information.

You are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality and security of this information at all times, using reasonable safeguards that are appropriate based upon the sensitivity of the information. This includes, but is not be limited to: (i) refraining from using the information for any purpose other than to evaluate the LYDA application or contact applicants; (ii) refraining from sharing or posting any of the information, or disclosing it to any other person or entity, whether verbally, electronically or in writing, unless strictly required to do so by applicable law or such other person or entity is also bound by a confidentiality agreement with regard to such information; (iii) refraining from printing the information, and from forwarding or saving it to a personal or third party device or account; (iv) refraining from any attempt to contact the LYDA applicant or obtain additional information on him/her (e.g., online searches); and (v) taking appropriate precautions against loss, theft, or access, use or unauthorized disclosure of the information. For example, without limitation, information that is accessed electronically should be protected by strong passwords that should not be shared with any other person, and if you have any information in hardcopy form, it should never be left unattended (unless in a locked cabinet or drawer) and should be cross-shredded when it is no longer needed.

If, when reading an application, you find that you may know the person, you should stop processing the application and contact lydawards@soroptimist.org immediately. You must also notify us immediately if you discover or suspect that there has been any loss or theft of confidential information, or any unauthorized access, use or disclosure of the information, so that we may take appropriate steps with your cooperation.

You may not access or retain any information about a LYDA applicant after your need for that information has come to an end. If you have any such information in your possession or control, you must return it without keeping any copy, excerpt or summary in any form, whether electronic or otherwise, when your role in assessing the application is complete (or earlier if requested by SIA).

.....

I have read the foregoing confidentiality agreement and I am familiar with its terms. I agree to abide by the confidentiality agreement and understand that any misuse or disclosure of any applicant's information will be treated as a breach of confidentiality.

By signing below, I agree to cooperate with SIA to investigate, remedy and comply with any legal obligations that might arise from any breach of an applicant's privacy.

By signing or typing my name below, I adhere to the above requirements.

Name

Date

JUDGES' EVALUATION SHEET

Instructions: Complete one of the below forms for each applicant. It's important for the review process that you use the full scale. Don't be afraid to give high marks in certain areas and low marks in others.

TIP! Before scoring, read *all* of the applications. This will give you a better sense of comparison for when to give a higher rating and when to give a lower rating.

Applicant Name: _____

PART I: Basic Eligibility Requirements

Please review these eligibility requirements—if any of them are not met, it immediately disqualifies the applicant.

- The applicant has dependents (dependents *do not* have to be the applicant's children).
- The applicant has primary financial responsibility for herself and her dependents.
- The applicant is entering or attending a high school equivalency, vocational, technical, or undergraduate degree program.
- The applicant has financial need.
- The applicant does not have and is not pursuing a graduate degree.
- The application is completed and signed, and includes at least one reference not related to the applicant.

PART II: Scoring

Please rate the applicant based on your reading of the applicant's responses on her application and her references.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Slightly Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree 3	Slightly Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
The applicant has clearly stated goals. Goals can be related to education, career, or family.					
The applicant is motivated to achieve her educational and career goals.					
The applicant demonstrates financial need.					
The applicant has faced hardships and shows resilience. Hardships can be economic and/or personal.					
The applicant serves as an inspiration and role model for her dependents.					
Reference(s) are supportive of the applicant.					
APPLICANT'S TOTAL SCORE:					

SAMPLE RECIPIENT LETTER

This letter can be customized and used to help your club notify *Live Your Dream Awards* recipients.

January X, 20XX
[INSERT NAME]
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear [INSERT NAME]:

Congratulations! You have been selected to receive a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* from Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]. It is our sincere hope that this cash award of **[\$[INSERT AWARD AMOUNT]]** will help you to achieve your educational goals and, later, your career goals as well.

In addition to this award, your application will be submitted for further judging at our region level. The first place award at the region level is \$5,000 and additional region-level recipients are awarded \$3,000.

The members of our club would like the opportunity to meet and honor you by **presenting this award in person at [INSERT EVENT INFORMATION: a special luncheon on March 8, International Women's Day, at the Anytown Inn]**. We hope that you will be able to join us.

We would like your permission to share your story with the local media to further honor you and your efforts. If you are comfortable with this, please sign the included [media consent form](#) and return it to us. It is okay if you would prefer that we not share your story. We would still like to celebrate you, with you!

I will contact you with more information about attending **[INSERT EVENT: our luncheon]**. Again, congratulations!

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME], President
Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]

SAMPLE NON-RECIPIENT LETTER

This letter can be customized and used to help your club notify applicants who were not selected to receive a *Live Your Dream Award*.

January X, 20XX
[INSERT NAME]
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear [INSERT NAME],

Thank you for submitting an application for Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]'s Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards*. We commend you for your ambitious goals and wish you much success in achieving them. We received a number of compelling applicants this year. Unfortunately, we have selected another candidate to receive this year's Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. You are welcome to apply again next year if you are still eligible.

We wish you all the best in your endeavors. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME], President

Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]

HOW TO: HONOR YOUR RECIPIENT

You've selected a recipient, now it's time to celebrate her!

Honoring your recipient is one of the most fun and rewarding aspects of the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards*! One of the most consistently reported outcomes from past recipients is an increase in their self-esteem and their impact as a role model for their dependents. Honoring your recipient helps her feel respected and valued as a woman in your community. It is also important for her family to see her recognized for her hard work.

Host a Recognition Event

Many clubs choose to honor their recipient(s) at an awards banquet or reception. Consider hosting a recognition event and inviting your recipient's family to join as well. Recipients consistently remark that feeling encouraged and recognized by women within their community is equally as rewarding as receiving the cash award. Furthermore, seeing their mother, wife, aunt, or sister receive an award is equally impactful on the recipient's family. We recommend seeking a volunteer photographer in your community who can take beautiful photos of the recipient(s) and her family—lovely for them to have and for your club and SIA to have to promote the *Live Your Dream Awards*! There are more specific tips in the How to Host a Successful Club Event section. Photos can be submitted to lydawards@soroptimist.org or through our [online Share Your Story form](#).

Be sure to convey to your honoree that attending the event is not compulsory--some women are uncomfortable being recognized publicly. Attending an event or sharing their story should never be a requirement to receive the award funds. It is always important to take the recipient's privacy and safety into consideration. Also be aware of power dynamics in order not to impose expectation or pressure on anything that may feel uncomfortable to her. Communicate, ask questions, and find out what would make it a positive experience for her. We want our recipients to feel valued and seen by your club, and this can be different for everyone, so we want to be able to be conscientious and adapt.

NOTE: Consider sending the award funds as early as possible and recognizing the recipient at a later time. Remember, these women have financial need!

Publicize Your Recipient

Many clubs create a news release to further honor their recipients, or share their recipient's story on their website to advertise the award to future potential applicants. These are great ideas, but in order to use your recipient's name and story, you will need her to sign a [media consent form](#) first. They have the option to select what they feel comfortable sharing on the form, whether it's only a first name, a photo, and/or their whole story. Your club must adhere to the choices she's made. Some recipients may not be comfortable with having their personal story shared and will choose to not sign the form. In these cases, clubs must honor the recipient's confidentiality.

Go Beyond a Cash Award

In addition to cash awards, many clubs offer non-monetary awards. One of SIA's strategic program objectives is to increase the ability of women to achieve economic empowerment. Therefore, consider what else applicants will need to help them achieve their goals, such as books, computers, groceries, and childcare. Club members can also volunteer their time and experience to assist recipients through mentoring, job training, and financial advice. These activities help to strengthen the quality of the impact that the award has on its recipients. Check out the [Beyond A Cash Award](#) document for more tips and suggestions!

HOW TO: HOST A SUCCESSFUL CLUB EVENT

You've selected a *Live Your Dream Award* recipient, and now it's time to celebrate! Follow these tips to make the event a memorable experience for everyone. You can make a big impact—and start a lasting bond—by showing that you value your recipient's input on how to make this experience accessible, welcoming and positive for her and her family.

Communication

The #1 tip for holding a successful event? Communication! All the tips below have this in common. You won't know what your club can do to make this a great experience for your recipient until you ask!

Anticipating Her Needs

Chances are, she shared quite a bit about herself in her application. Use that information to anticipate her needs. For example, if she disclosed a history of addiction, it may be thoughtful to host an alcohol-free event. If you know she's taking three classes and working full time, ask about her availability before picking a time and date. If she states her vehicle is unreliable, have a club member offer her a ride. If you know she's currently unemployed, offer to cover some costs associated with her attendance, such as childcare or transportation.

TIP: While it might feel good to hand over the award funding at your club event, delaying the funding could negatively impact your recipient. Instead of waiting to distribute funding until your event, send the funding as soon as your recipient is confirmed and present awardees with a certificate at your event.

Location and Transportation

Consult with her when choosing a venue. Ask what transportation she has access to (e.g. public transportation, her own vehicle, a ride with a family member). If she takes public transportation, choose a venue close to a bus or train stop. Consider covering the fare or gas money it takes for her to get to the event and back home. If she lives far from your club, consider choosing a location closer to her. Once you have chosen a location, let her know in advance, so she has time to plan accordingly.

Ensuring Her Comfort

A little thoughtfulness can go a long way. Let her know what kind of attire is appropriate for the event to help her feel more prepared. Consider hosting your event at a location where a suit or fancy clothing would not be required.

Invite her to bring guests who have supported her goals and aspirations, such as her family, teachers, or references. Having her supporters present will make the event a celebration of her accomplishments, and help her feel more comfortable in a room of new people.

Identify a contact person to be available the day of the event. This person can answer any questions regarding directions, parking, or other logistics, and then greet her as she arrives, introduce her to others, and ensure a warm welcome.

TIP: Personalize your event as much as possible. Include her favorite meal, dessert, or flowers. Ask how she wants her name written on her certificate, and what else you can do to make her feel comfortable and welcome at a celebration of *her*. Don't assume – communicate and ask questions!

Childcare

If she's bringing her children, ensure the venue is appropriate for children and ask what you can do to make the event enjoyable for the kids. You might offer to provide age-appropriate activities, such as colored pencils and paper, a puzzle, or a craft. If she plans to leave young kids at home, offer to cover the cost of childcare. Any way your club can help to reduce her stress will help her focus on the most important part of the event—celebrating her!

Speaking

When inviting your recipient to speak at the event, think about it from her point of view. Consider how writing about your own obstacles in an essay would feel different from recounting them aloud to a roomful of people. Surely, hearing about your most painful life experiences would be compelling for the audience, but might be very difficult for you. Similarly, no matter how empathetic and supportive the audience, not every woman will feel comfortable talking about her obstacles. We want to be mindful about topics/details that can be triggering for both the recipient, as well as attendees.

For these reasons, your recipient does not have to speak at the event at all. Nor does she have to share her story with the audience, even in writing.

Ask what would make this a positive experience for her. Perhaps discussing her obstacles would make her feel brave. Perhaps, it would transport her back to dark times and make her feel small. If she chooses to speak, encourage her to highlight her strengths and accomplishments. Ultimately, empowering her to be the author of her own story is the most valuable part of this experience.

When introducing her to your audience, rather than detailing her obstacles, consider sharing what about her application inspired your club to select her as a recipient and want to support her (e.g. she has strong goals, cares about her family, eloquently describes dreams for her future).

If she's not comfortable with public speaking, you might offer another solution, such as asking for written remarks from her that you will print out and distribute at each table.

Whether or not she chooses to share at your event, your club could invite someone else to speak about the importance of education and overcoming obstacles in pursuit of dreams.

TIP: Assure her that no matter what, you're excited to celebrate her, are inspired by what she has accomplished, and want to learn about her aspirations for the future. Double check with your recipient how to pronounce her name and make sure anyone speaking at the event has the phonetic pronunciation of her name available.

Engage Others

Who else within your community can be included in your celebration? An event highlighting Soroptimist's signature program and the individual women we serve can be an ideal way to thank your judges, honor past recipients of the *Live Your Dream Award*, or inspire other women who are interested in learning more about Soroptimist. Consider inviting local politicians and other community leaders, or a local newspaper that can highlight your club's impact in the community.

Photography

We recommend seeking a volunteer photographer in your community who can take beautiful photos of the recipient and her family—lovely for them to have and for your club and SIA to have to promote the *Live Your Dream Awards*! Email photos to lydwards@soroptimist.org. Below are some tips to ensure your photos are as amazing as your recipients are!

- The higher the resolution, the better.
- Please do not send us photos in a Word or PDF document—we need the actual picture file. JPG, EPS, and PNG are all good file types, as long as they are high-resolution!
- Large group shots do not usually make good photos. Close-ups are more compelling. Generally, photos should include up to four people so that you can clearly see everyone's faces.
- A simple background focuses attention on the subject and makes clear, strong pictures. Do not be afraid to ask people to move to a better location if the background is distracting.
- Try to create backdrops for photo opportunities ahead of time--for example, hang Soroptimist banners in key locations, display the logo, etc.

TIP: Invite your recipient(s) to be in a photograph (after obtaining permission via the media consent form) with club members. Share the photos with the recipient(s) as a reminder of her special celebration, with club members as an example of their meaningful work in the community, and with a press release to local media.

Beyond a Cash Award

Consider providing [additional support for your recipient](#). Asking for her input is a great step to ensure your gesture is not only meaningful, but also meets her needs. Perhaps she needs a certain book, piece of equipment, an item of clothing for an interview, a self-care item, groceries, or childcare so she can catch up on her tasks or have some quiet time to herself. Perhaps you can match up club members' professional experience with a need, such as mentorship or mock interviews.

Reminder and Overview

Your recipient is likely managing many responsibilities. Contact her with a reminder before the event and ask if she has any last-minute questions and/or needs. Walk through an overview of what to expect (e.g. you will be near the entrance to greet her when she arrives; at 7pm she will receive the award and give her remarks; at 7:30pm dinner will be served).

EVENT CHECKLIST

You can use the checklist to ensure you have discussed important information with your recipient, so she feels comfortable and prepared for the event celebrating her achievements.

Availability

I know our recipient's availability and confirmed she is available to attend our event.

Location

Our recipient is able to travel to our event or transportation has been arranged.

Children

I know what activities our recipient's children like and/or childcare has been arranged.

Speaking

I understand what our recipient wants to share and how. I have confirmed the pronunciation of her name and shared it with any speakers.

Additional Support

I learned what additional support would be most helpful to our recipient and have made plans with my club to provide it.

Event Reminder

I contacted our recipient to remind her of the event details and to provide an overview of what she can expect during the event.

SCRIPT FOR PRESENTATION OF CLUB AWARD(S)

Hello and welcome! Thank you all for being a part of this special celebration today. We are here to honor [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME] and her inspiring achievements. [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME], everyone here today supports you and believes in you and wants the very best for you and your family.

As Soroptimists, we know many hard working and courageous women. They're members of our clubs, they're leading the many regions of our organization, and serving on our board of directors, and they're the women we support with our *Live Your Dream Awards*.

Since 1972, Soroptimists have been empowering women through the life-changing *Live Your Dream Awards*. These awards assist women who support their families financially and give women the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects.

Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME] has been supporting women in the [INSERT NAME OF TOWN/COMMUNITY] community since [INSERT YEAR]. We have provided more than \$[INSERT TOTAL] in cash awards and additional support, including [INSERT TYPES OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT YOUR CLUB HAS PROVIDED: mentoring, interview attire, and gift cards]. Women who have received *Live Your Dream Awards* have gone on to [INSERT RECIPIENT SUCCESS: graduate with degrees in nursing and education, get promotions and better-paying jobs that allowed them to move their families to neighborhoods with better schools, and work more consistent hours so they could be home more often with their children].

By working together, Soroptimists across North America, South America, and the Pacific Rim annually provide over \$2.8 million in cash awards to more than 2,000 motivated women who are working tirelessly to make a better life for themselves and their families. *Live Your Dream Awards* recipients tell us they have been able to improve their standard of living, increase their self-esteem, and serve as role models for their children and other dependents.

The awards start here at the local, club-level where recipients receive \$[INSERT AMOUNT]. First-place recipients then go on to be considered at a region level, where they may receive an additional \$3,000 or \$5,000. Top recipients are then considered at an international level and have the opportunity to receive another \$10,000.

But numbers are only part of the *Live Your Dream Awards* story. So many women tell us how much the support they receive from Soroptimists matters to them. Knowing that there is an entire global organization of women encouraging them and believing in them and their dreams helps to ignite change in their lives.

When women are educated, they have opportunity and choice, and they are much less susceptible to the many issues that can disrupt their lives. They will be less likely to live in poverty, less vulnerable to human traffickers, more likely to leave a domestic violence situation, will be able to access healthcare, and, ultimately, raise stronger healthier families.

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* focus on education for one reason: evidence shows that a quality education – *more than anything else* – holds the greatest potential to transform the lives of women and girls.

Our *Live Your Dream Awards* address a common need around the world *and* here in our own community. They quite literally make dreams come true.

Today, it is my honor to introduce [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME]... [INSERT DETAILS – ONLY IF SHE IS COMFORTABLE SHARING]

(Recipient remarks)

Thank you, [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME]. You are a remarkable woman who overcame obstacles to be here today. You showed courage, strength, and perseverance. You set an example for all women, and we are honored to present you with a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* today.

You join a group of very special women who have received *Live Your Dream Awards*... [ACKNOWLEDGE PAST RECIPIENTS WHO MAY BE PRESENT AND/OR WHAT PAST RECIPIENTS HAVE ACHIEVED]

Despite what they have experienced, so many of these women are able to use these awards to improve their lives. And so often, they take their experiences to help improve the lives of other women and girls. That's the beautiful cycle of long-lasting change that the *Live Your Dream Awards* create.

So [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME], we are very excited for the next chapter of your life. And we look forward to your many accomplishments to come!

We know that success usually isn't a straight path - often there are obstacles and detours along the way – and that we can't make it there alone. Soroptimists are committed to supporting the women who receive our *Live Your Dream Awards*. We want to acknowledge their hard work and be a part of their path to success.

But Soroptimists don't do this work alone, either. You – our community – are also part of making dreams come true. Your financial support, your precious time volunteering and supporting our causes, helping us spread the word about our important work, and being here today... make it possible for [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME], and other past recipients present, to know her dreams are within reach, and our whole community is behind her.

So I hope Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME] continues to have your support. Because we have big dreams of serving more women of [INSERT CLUB NAME] – with cash awards and other assistance. Women tell us they need [INSERT NEEDS: mentoring, school fees, networking, financial planning, and childcare]. Can you help us provide any of these things? If so, [INSERT INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW THEY CAN CONTRIBUTE OR GET INVOLVED: *there are donation envelopes and index cards on your table. Please write your contact information and what skills or interests you have that you would be willing to share with these inspiring women. A couple volunteers will walk around with baskets to collect the envelopes and index cards.*]

I know this community is important to you, and so is igniting change for women. That's why you're all here today. I appreciate the many ways you each have contributed to our life-changing *Live Your Dream Awards*, and I am excited to continue working together with all of you to turn dreams and potential into reality for women and families of [INSERT CLUB NAME].

Thank you!

BEYOND A CASH AWARD

Going Beyond a Cash Award

Introduction

Soroptimist International of the Americas recognizes the power and potential of the *Live Your Dream Award* and continues to seek ways in which to strengthen its impact on women's lives. SIA seeks to have **80 percent of Live Your Dream Award recipients who have completed their education report an increased standard of living** within three years of receiving the award. Based on an outstanding history of creativity and commitment to this program by SIA clubs, we are confident that if clubs implement some of the below strategies, we can meet this challenge!

Planning for Additional Support

There are details below that describe strategies, such as mentoring, job support, financial support, working with children, etc. to creatively increase the impact of a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. While those strategies are useful suggestions for your club, you may need some assistance with how to plan any additional support. **This resource helps your club take the next step by explaining 1) how you can learn what additional support your recipient needs and 2) how to make a plan to provide the additional support with your club.**

Learn More About Your Recipient

Review her application and reference(s)

- Review your recipient's application and reference(s) to collect important facts that will provide insight on her strengths and needs
- Take notes on the information you collect

Meet Face-to-Face

- Invite your recipient to meet you for coffee or to share a meal. Explain you want to get to know her better and you want to determine if there are other ways your Soroptimist club might be able to support her. You could also invite her to a club meeting if she is comfortable with that. Remind her you will respect her wishes regarding privacy and confidentiality.
- Explain you that you would like to discuss some personal questions to learn more about her, and that you would like to use this information to develop a plan for additional support to help her finish her education and live her dreams.
- Over coffee or your meal, ask your recipient questions that will provide insight on her strengths and needs.

Examples include:

- Briefly tell me about yourself and your background.
- What are your strengths?
- What do you think you are good at?
- Tell me about your life as a child.
- What were your challenges as a child?
- As an adult, what are your challenges?
- What are your goals 1, 2, and/or 3 years from now?
- What are your current needs?
- How might our Soroptimist club help you?

Develop a Personal Profile About Your Recipient

- Work with your recipient to create a profile about her and areas of possible support. Be sure to be clear that these might not all be items that your Soroptimist Club can offer, but that identifying them is a strong first step.
- Focus on the most important information.
- Create a simple profile of your recipient including the following topics:
 - Her Background
 - Her Strengths

- Her Barriers to Success
- Her Goals (Education and Employment)
- Her Areas of Need (Personal and Family)

A sample profile:

Background	Strengths	Barriers	Goals	Areas of Need
27 year old single mom, one child	Daughter gives her joy	Poor self-esteem and self-worth	Complete Bachelors of Nursing degree	Mentoring
Employed as a hostess, income \$13,000 per year	Likes speaking publicly	History of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse	Find a nursing job	Counseling
Survivor of human trafficking	Loves to write Has transportation	No family support	Save enough money to move to a neighborhood with a good school	Educational Assistance Financial Support

Make a Long-Term Plan

- Identify club and community resources to address your recipient’s barriers and areas of need. Examples include:
 - Provide a mentor (Soroptimist member or other community member based on recipient’s personal/career interests)
 - Find options for free or sliding scale counseling services
 - Provide partial financial payment for additional education expenses
 - Research other grant/scholarship opportunities for which your recipient would be eligible
 - Purchase a laptop and medical equipment/clothing for clinical nursing courses
 - Provide assistance with resume writing, practice interviewing, and networking
 - Provide financial assistance during annual events (gifts/gift cards for Christmas and birthdays, activities during school breaks, supplies for back-to-school)
- Determine the time-frame for assistance. Decide what support will be provided in 6 months, one year, two years, and/or three years.
- Create a simple action plan. Start with what you know for sure your recipient needs. Consider making a short-term plan (6 months to one year) and further developing as necessary. Identify a timeline, what type of support will be provided, and by whom. A sample action plan:

When	What	Who
March – May	Present financial award	Club members
	Identify a mentor	Club members
	Research counseling options	Club members
	Research scholarship/grant opportunities	Club members
June – August	Invite to Soroptimist social	Club mentor
	Share identified counseling options	Club mentor
	Share scholarship/grant opportunities	Club mentor
	Counseling	Community church

	Purchase medical equipment/clothing for clinical nursing course	Club members
	Financial assistance for summer camp (for daughter)	Club members
	Back to school supplies (for daughter)	Club members
September – November	Invite to club meetings	Club mentor
	Counseling	Community church
December – February	Gifts/gift cards for Christmas	Club members
	Counseling	Community church
	Financial assistance for tuition	Club members
Year 2	Invite to <i>Live Your Dream Award</i> ceremony for next recipient	Club mentor
	Graduation gift	Club members
	Help recipient prepare for interviews	Club mentor
	Shop for work clothes	Club mentor
Year 3	Invite to <i>Live Your Dream Award</i> ceremony for next recipient	Club mentor
	Housewarming gifts for new apartment	Club members

Review

- Estimate costs for each item of support and the total cost of the plan.
- Consult with your club. Ask for input on what is feasible for the club to provide considering available funds and time. Decide as a club how and when support can be provided to your recipient. Be realistic—it is better to over-deliver than to disappoint your recipient!
- Meet with your recipient to ask her for approval of your plan.
- If there are any areas of need your club cannot assist with, consider if you can assist her in finding that help through other resources in your community (example: If she needs housing assistance, perhaps someone can help her research how to obtain housing assistance).

Finalize

- Appoint a club mentor to support and communicate with your recipient.
- Review and update the plan annually or as needed.

Increasing the Impact of the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* in the Lives of Award Recipients

A 2017 survey of the 2013-2014 *Live Your Dream Awards* region award recipients asked which resources or assistance, in addition to a cash award, would have been most helpful for these women as they completed their education. Their responses spanned a wide range of support options:

- 73%: An opportunity for additional funding to support further education or training
- 34% Career guidance (i.e. job searching, resume review)
- 34%: Tax or financial advice
- 33% School supplies
- 28%: An opportunity for funding to start a business
- 27% Internship/volunteer opportunities
- 26%: Mentoring by a local Soroptimist member
- 24%: An on-line, private support group of women who have received a *Live Your Dream Award*
- 15%: On-line mentoring

Suggestions for Additional Support

The below strategies were devised both in response to this feedback from former award recipients and also based on existing ideas from clubs already working in their communities to creatively increase the impact of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award.

Mentoring

Seek to create a long-lasting relationship with your award recipient wherein you provide ongoing mentorship and support to help her reach her educational and professional goals.

- Contact your award recipient throughout the year and ask how she is doing.
 - What frustrations is she experiencing?
 - What are some of her strengths that she has identified that can help her overcome obstacles?
 - What does she need to help her overcome these frustrations/obstacles? (Have her identify these needs and access if there is anything you can do to help her with these needs.)
 - Do you share similar obstacles?
 - How have you worked to overcome those obstacles in your own life? (It's good to keep these in mind and offer suggestions but be conscientious as to not impose or expect the same things to work for each person. Keep the focus on her and not on comparisons.)
 - Are there things you can do to support her while she seeks to overcome similar obstacles?
- Offer to take your award recipient out to lunch every couple of months to check in and develop a deeper relationship.
 - Provide recipients with online mentorship through regular emails or chats.

Job Support

Many recipients note that one of the biggest changes in their lives stemmed from knowing that a strong community of successful women believed in them. As Soroptimists, you are respected female leaders and professionals in your local community.

- Assist recipients with completing job or school applications, provide letters of recommendation or serve as a reference for a job application.
- Ask your recipient if she would like you to review her resume or offer to conduct a mock interview. Provide advice about interview etiquette and attire or how to best structure a response to questions.
- Offer to take her shopping and buy her an interview outfit.
- Provide strategies to enhance networking capabilities and tips to facilitate a successful job search.
 - Do you have networking strategies that have worked well in your professional life?
 - Are there contacts that you have that might be helpful to the recipient?

Financial Support

Encourage club members to think about ways to provide ongoing financial assistance throughout the year to supplement your club's generous cash award with other types of assistance to help meet the multi-faceted needs of female heads-of-household.

- Donate student or family support items, such as laptops, professional clothing, children's clothing, or household goods.
- Provide gift certificates for day-to-day needs, such as gas, automotive care, public transportation, haircuts, self-care items, prescriptions, or groceries.
- Clubs can also donate services that are of financial value, such as volunteering to prepare your recipient's income taxes.
- Purchase and wrap holiday gifts for recipients and their families.

Working with Children

The majority of award recipients have noted that the positive impact of the award extended beyond the recipients themselves to their children. There are many ways clubs can engage in enriching opportunities with or provide support to award recipients' children.

- Create programming, such as a "Mommy and Me" fun day for recipients and their children.
- Sponsor a summer camp opportunity.
- Help defray back-to-school costs by providing backpacks filled with school or art supplies.

- Donate musical instruments to allow an award recipient's children to participate in a school band or orchestra.
- Arrange carpools to increase access to after-school programming and activities for recipients' children.
- Assist with childcare.
- Host birthday parties for her children or help purchase birthday gifts for them.

Program Support

Ask former recipients to engage with members in supporting the *Live Your Dream Awards*. Ask them to lend their talents and creativity to ensure the success of this program. This will further demonstrate that your club values and respects your recipient as a member of your community and as a strong, capable woman.

- Find other applicants: Recipients can informally spread the word about opportunities available through the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* with classmates or friends who might be eligible to apply. Encourage recipients to get creative and generate ideas about new groups or agencies at which to provide application information.
- Serve as judges: Asking a former award recipient to serve as a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* judge further demonstrates your club's respect and admiration for award recipients and deepens your working relationship with each other.
- Marketing materials: Former award recipients can speak to what appealed to or inspired them to apply for the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. They may have some additional insight on how to best promote it to others.
- Newspaper articles: Interviewing recipients about how their life has been changed through the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* is another meaningful way in which recipients could contribute to supporting the program while simultaneously being celebrated as a role model within their local community.

Connect Past Club Recipients as a Support Group

Clubs can help create networks of peer support for recipients by providing the contact information and resources necessary to form support groups of current and former award recipients from both their own club and other nearby clubs.

- Offer to secure a space, such as a room at a community center, for recipients to come together and meet or help facilitate an online support network.
- Invite former award recipients to attend club banquets or award ceremonies together to build community.

Connect with Other Community Resources, Including Opportunities for Additional Funding, Financial Advice, etc.

Clubs can serve as a bridge from the recipient to a wealth of other community resources.

- Connect recipients to community center programs or other free instruction that might bolster practical skills, such as computer skills.
- Keep a record of community resources so clubs can connect recipients to appropriate services, such as free counseling, free financial planning services, or community agencies that provide assistance with utilities or heating costs.
- Direct to resources or provide assistance to help a recipient launch her own small business.
- Investigate opportunities for other grant awards or scholarships to complement the financial assistance provided by the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards*. Do other programs provide assistance with paying back student loans?
- Are there opportunities to reduce insurance or other costs based on degree completion?

Include in Club Activities or Membership

Because of the life-changing nature of this award and how proud many recipients are to receive it, recipients often express an interest in remaining in contact with the club.

- Invite your recipient to join your club in participating in a rewarding service project.
- If a former recipient is now in the financial position to do so, invite her to join your club.
- Gift a former recipient her first year's membership with Soroptimist as a graduation gift.

Conclusion

Through the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards*, SIA reaches tens of thousands of women across its countries and territories. But there is still more that can be done to further increase the quality of change in the lives of award recipients and improve the standard of living for these women and their families. Beyond a one-time cash award, Soroptimists can provide ongoing support and encouragement to women in ways that deepen this impact and go even further to fulfill our mission.

HOW TO: REPORTING

Share your success and enter your recipient for further awards!

In order for your club's participation in the *Live Your Dream Awards* to be recognized and for your club recipient to be eligible for further awards, your club must report its participation to SIA and your region.

Please note: this process is now entirely from the 22-23 club year on, and all clubs must report their award recipients to SIA using the [online reporting form](#) to be counted as participating in the program. Transmittals will no longer be in use. We cannot accept emailed, mailed, or PDF reports.

The online report can be accessed in all languages at [this link](#)—use the toggle in the right hand corner of the form to select a different language. The questions on the report have not changed from the transmittal. You can review our [video resource](#) or [PDF handout](#) to assist you in preparing your report.

The form will allow you to save and return to it at a later time. There is no need to save as you go, but save if you need to take a break and finish it later. You can even edit your report after submission (up to the deadline) using the link in your confirmation email. You and your region chair will each receive a copy of your submitted report. You will need a device to access the form, access to the internet, and a saved electronic copy (on your device) of your club's top recipient's application and reference(s). You will be required to upload these to the form. Otherwise, your top recipient will not be eligible for further awards.

Your club recipient could be eligible for additional awards totaling US \$15,000! The number and amount of awards given by the region is dependent upon the number of club awards distributed through *Live Your Dream Awards* program in the prior club year. This is an added incentive for clubs to participate. It not only increases the chance that their club recipient will be awarded at the region-level, but more importantly, the *Live Your Dream Awards* will impact more women. The federation gives three USD\$10,000 finalist awards each year.

Although it would be wonderful for your club's finalist to go on for additional awards, please realize that this is not a competition between clubs or regions. The entire organization should be proud of the women who are selected each year as the region and federation finalists.

Be Sure to Adhere to Deadlines!

- Clubs with district judging* **must report their club recipients BEFORE FEBRUARY 1.**
- Clubs with region-only judging* **must report their club recipients BEFORE FEBRUARY 15.**

**Unsure of whether or not your region has districts? Contact your region chair.*

Submit Your Entry

For your applicant to be included in district or region judging, your online submission must be received and completed in full by the deadlines above. Only online reporting form submissions will be accepted—club transmittals, emailed, mailed, PDF, or faxed forms are not acceptable.

Your applicant's full name, contact information, and their application with reference(s) must be attached to the reporting form.

Note for Application System Users (US/Canada)

There are two steps to reporting your award recipients:

1. Submit the [online club reporting form](#)
2. Indicate Your Club's Decision on the online application system.

Notification of Additional Awards

District- and region-level *Live Your Dream Awards* chairs will notify clubs if their recipients have been selected to receive additional awards at that level. Clubs can expect to receive notification between March and April. Please check with your region chair for details.

Federation-level judging takes place in May of each year, and the federation finalists will be notified in May by the federation president.

HOW TO: PUBLICIZE THE AWARD

Make your community aware of the *Live Your Dream Awards*!

Publicizing the *Live Your Dream Awards* is not only a great way to help recruit applicants, but also to raise awareness of Soroptimist and your club's presence in your community.

While public awareness is integral when recruiting applicants, your club can publicize the award all year long, even after the award cycle has passed!

Distribute Materials at All Club Events

One of the simplest ways to raise awareness of the *Live Your Dream Awards* is by providing informational material at all of your club events. The eligibility checklist and poster both provide basic information and can be customized with your club's contact information, so potential applicants can easily contact your club for an application.

Make Community Contacts

Identify organizations within your community that work with potential *Live Your Dream Awards* applicants, and contact them using the [Sample Applicant Recruiting letter](#). Provide these organizations with applications that they can distribute to the women with whom they work, and ask that they hang a *Live Your Dream Awards* poster in a visible area.

Post the *Live Your Dream Awards* Poster in Highly Trafficked Community Areas

Distribute the [Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards Poster](#) to raise community awareness about the program. The poster needs to be personalized before it is posted. Place copies of the poster in all possible locations, such as on bulletin boards at food markets, community centers, and shopping centers.

MEDIA CONSENT FORM

Soroptimist Media Consent Form

As a *Live Your Dream Awards* recipient, your story is truly inspiring. When we promote the *Live Your Dream Awards*, we often use stories of past award recipients. The reasons we share these stories are to 1) encourage more women to apply for the *Live Your Dream Award*, 2) attract donors and corporate sponsors so that we can provide even more deserving women with cash grants through this program, 3) further honor recipients by telling their inspiring stories of perseverance and achievement, 4) attract media attention and grow recognition for SIA, and 5) raise funds for SIA. Allowing us to share your story for these purposes is purely voluntary. Please read and sign this copy of our media consent form if you allow us to share your story.

By signing this media consent form, you give to Soroptimist International of the Americas Inc. and all affiliated and associated entities and organizations including without limitation LiveYourDream.org (collectively “SIA”), permission to take photographs and make videotapes and voice recordings of the undersigned (the “**Presenter**”) and grant SIA the unlimited and perpetual right to reproduce, display, communicate, perform, distribute, publish, circulate, make derivative works, or otherwise use Presenter’s:

Name (please check one of the following):

- My (Presenter’s) full name (first and last)
- My first name, but only the first letter of Presenter’s last name
- Only my Presenter’s first name, but not Presenter’s last name or initial
- Pseudonym – i.e., not my real first or last name. Please let us know if there is a specific name you would like to use, otherwise SIA will choose one on its own: _____ (preferred pseudonym)

as well as Presenter’s (check all that apply):

- My photographs, videos, likeness, images and/or voice
- My biographical details – i.e., age, disability, ethnicity, gender
- Information on my story/life experiences, submitted by me in written or other form
- Testimonials and quotes about the impact of the *Live Your Dream Award* I received
- My city and province of residence

The items ticked above are collectively referred to as the “**Works**”) in whole or in part, for publicity purposes, fund raising appeals, advertisements and otherwise in connection with the mission of SIA, in various formats including, but not limited to, print, photographs, video recordings, and audio recordings in any and all media including but not limited to print media, social media, websites, television, audiovisual and electronic media (collectively “**Media**”). All such Works shall be the property of SIA, which shall own all right, title and interest.

Without limiting the above, the Presenter consents to SIA’s use and disclosure of the personal information contained in the Works or otherwise provided by the Presenter to SIA (“**Personal Information**”), including sensitive Personal Information, for the purposes outlined above. The Presenter understands that:

SIA may use and disclose the Personal Information, including the Presenter’s personal story, testimonials, and information on her life experiences, for promotional purposes on the Internet, in the Media or otherwise.

Even if the Presenter has elected for SIA to use a Pseudonym instead of all or part of her real name, it is possible that the Presenter could be recognized based on her image, voice, biographical details, location information, testimonials and/or the description of her story/life experiences.

Information disclosed by SIA will be available to the public. Corporate partners and marketing firms, and may be re-disclosed by any recipient or other third party, and SIA may not be able to control the use or disclosure of the Presenter's Personal Information by such third parties.

The Presenter's Personal Information will be stored in locked filing cabinet and accessible to staff designated to prepare stories for the reasons listed in the first paragraph on page 1 and who have a need to know such information to perform their job duties. The Personal Information could be transmitted, stored and published in the 122 countries comprising Soroptimist International, for the purposes outlined above. Information transferred to other countries may be accessed by the courts, law enforcement and national security authorities in the jurisdiction(s) where it is transferred, processed or stored.

Without limiting the above, the Presenter hereby waives all rights of publicity and privacy which the Presenter may have in the Works and any right or option to inspect or approve the finished product or advertising or other copy that may be used along with the Works. The Presenter hereby waives and releases any claims the Presenter now has or in the future may have against SIA (and the other releasees mentioned below) relating to or arising out of the use of the Works and/or the use and disclosure of the Presenter's Personal Information as described above, including, without limitation, any claims for compensation for the use of such materials.

This consent and release shall be applicable to SIA as well as its and their officers and directors and other agents or employees who may be involved in disseminating the Works, and to the photographer, the videographer, the advertising agency or publisher of any material in which the Works may be used. The Presenter also understands that any use, including the broadcast and publication, of the Works is within the sole discretion of SIA and that they may not be used at all.

The Presenter may withdraw consent to SIA's continued use and disclosure of Personal Information contained in the Works at any time. However, please note that such withdrawal will not have retroactive effect, and SIA cannot control continued or further distribution of Personal Information by third parties, to the extent that such Personal Information has already been published or otherwise made available to persons outside SIA's control. The Presenter may contact SIA Program Director to withdraw consent, or to access, correct or update Personal Information, as well as to obtain written information or make enquiries about SIA's privacy policies and practices including use of service providers (including affiliates) outside Canada.

NAME: (Print name)

Check one:

- () The individual represents that he/she has reached his/her 18th birthday and signs below.
() The undersigned is a minor person and his/her parent guardian has signed this form where indicated.

Dated: _____

By: (Print name) _____ (Signature) _____

WITNESS (Print name) _____

(Signature) _____

(Address) _____

If above person is under 18 years of age:

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

The undersigned represents that he/she is a parent or guardian of the above named minor, that he/she has the legal right to consent to the terms of this Media Consent, that he/she has read the foregoing instrument and that he/she for and on behalf of the said minor, and in his/her own capacity, consents to, accepts and approves this Media Consent and releases SIA and the other persons to whom the release is applicable, from any claim or liability with respect to the said creation and use of the Works as set out herein.

Dated: _____

By: (Print name) _____

(Signature) _____ (Relationship) _____

WITNESS: (Print name) _____ (Signature) _____

Address _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Date: _____



FACT SHEET

Award Summary

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women* provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. Recipients can use the award for tuition, books, childcare, carfare, or any other education-related expense. Each year, over \$2.8 million is provided in cash grants to women in need. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$40 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families—leading to stronger communities, nations, and the world.

Award Amount

The *Live Your Dream Award* starts at the club level where award amounts vary. Soroptimist International of **[INSERT CLUB NAME]** will provide a **[INSERT AWARD AMOUNT]** award. Club-level recipients then become eligible for region-level awards granted in each of Soroptimist's 26 regions. The first-place region recipients then become candidates for one of three \$10,000 finalist awards.

Applications

Applications are available **[LIST LOCATIONS]**, or by contacting **[INSERT CLUB CHAIR NAME]**.

Deadline

November 15

Soroptimist International of Anytown

Founded in 1987, the **[INSERT CLUB NAME]** club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. Soroptimist, a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers [LiveYourDream.org](https://www.LiveYourDream.org)—an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls. For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit www.soroptimist.org.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE SEEKING APPLICANTS**NEWS RELEASE: [INSERT CLUB NAME] Soroptimists to Offer Cash Grant to Women Seeking Financial Assistance for Educational or Training Expenses****Date****Contact Name, Phone Number and Email**

CITY, State— Women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families and seek financial assistance to continue their education or receive training can now apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Applications are available at the **[INSERT LOCATIONS HERE]**, or by contacting **[INSERT CLUB AWARD CHAIR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]**. The application deadline is November 15.

The **[INSERT CLUB NAME]** club will provide a \$1,000 cash award to its award recipient, who will then advance to the Soroptimist **[INSERT REGION NAME]** Region level, where recipients could receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

Recipients can use the *Live Your Dream Award* to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. This includes tuition, books, childcare, carfare, or any other education-related expense.

The *Live Your Dream Award* provides over \$2.8 million in cash awards to head-of-household women in need each year. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$40 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program. It improves the recipients' quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations, and the world.

Founded in 1987, the **[INSERT CLUB NAME]** club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. Soroptimist, a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers [LiveYourDream.org](https://www.LiveYourDream.org)—an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls. For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit www.soroptimist.org.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE HONORING AWARD RECIPIENTS

NEWS RELEASE: [INSERT CLUB NAME] Soroptimists Honor Live Your Dream Award Recipient(s)

Present local woman with \$1,000 cash grant for educational expenses

Date

Contact: Insert Name, Phone Number and Email

CITY, State—Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME], a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment., will present a \$1,000 Soroptimist *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women* to help a local woman improve her economic situation. The awards ceremony will be held [INSERT EVENT DETAILS HERE: **at 6:30 p.m. on March 8 at the Anytown Ramada Inn. The Anytown Soroptimists hold its awards ceremony each year on International Women’s Day—the day that celebrates women’s contributions to society.**]

[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT RECIPIENTS IF CONSENT IS GIVEN]

[Recipient Regina Harrison, 34, will use the cash award to complete her bachelor’s degree at Anytown College, where she is majoring in social work. Once she completes her studies, Harrison, a domestic abuse survivor, plans to counsel other women who have also left abusive situations.

“I had run out of money and wasn’t going to be able to complete my degree,” Harrison said. “The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* came through just in time. I’m looking forward to finishing my degree so I can go on to help other women as I’ve been helped.”]

The *Live Your Dream Award* provides women who serve as the primary financial providers for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare, or any other education-related expense.

The [INSERT CLUB NAME] Soroptimists chose [INSERT RECIPIENT NAME AND DETAILS: because of her optimistic attitude, her 3.8 grade-point-average in college, and the excellent recommendations she received. Harrison has been raising three children while working as a waitress.]

[INSERT RECIPIENT NAME:] will now advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Date

[INSERT NAME], Editor
Anytown Press
453 Maple Avenue
Anytown, Anystate 15235

Dear [INSERT NAME]:

You won't have to look further than Anytown to find an inspirational woman who has endured difficult circumstances but carries on with courage and determination. She is a hero to the many local organizations, such as the Laurel House Women's Center, for which she volunteers. She is a hero to Anytown College, where she attends classes and participates in several campus outreach programs. And most important, she is a hero to her three children, who gave their mother reason to leave an abusive relationship and seek a better life.

I would like to share with you and your readers the story of [INSERT RECIPIENT NAME]. [INSERT RECIPIENT STORY WITH CONSENT: Regina, 34, has inspired us with her profound story and motivation. We recently granted her a Soroptimist *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award for Women*. Regina will use the \$1,000 *Live Your Dream Award* to finish her bachelor's degree in social work].

The *Live Your Dream Award* is Soroptimist International of the Americas' major program. Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME] is one of nearly 1,300 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. The award provides women who serve as the primary financial providers for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare, or any other education-related expense.

The *Live Your Dream Award* provides over \$2.8 million in cash grants to head-of-household women in need each year. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$40 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program. It improves the recipients' quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations, and the world.

[INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME: Regina] was chosen as the award recipient from among 50 area applicants. She will now advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] Region award level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. Should she receive that award, [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME: Regina] would then be eligible for an additional \$10,000.

[INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME: Regina Harrison] joins a long list of women who have been living their dreams since 1972 with the help of the Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. I believe your readers would be as inspired by her story as we were. I'll follow up with you shortly to determine your interest in this story. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[INSERT CLUB CONTACT]

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARD SPEECH INSTRUCTIONS

The Soroptimist *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women* speech provides a way for clubs to create awareness about the program and the Soroptimist organization. It was designed as a template and can easily be customized. The speech can be given whenever a club member is invited to speak—be it a community college, a meeting of another civic organization, a chamber of commerce meeting, etc. Here are some tips for effective public speaking. Contact the communications department at SIA headquarters with any questions about this speech or other public awareness activities.

10 TIPS FOR GIVING A GREAT SPEECH

1) Practice makes perfect.

The more you practice, the easier it will be to give your speech. It's fine to use notes or index cards—but the less you have to rely on them, the better your speech will flow.

2) Make eye contact.

Be sure to look around the room while you deliver your speech. Take care to connect with individual people in your audience.

3) Mistakes happen.

If you make one, just keep going. Everyone will be interested in the substance of your speech. They won't remember a few mistakes.

4) Speak slowly, clearly, and loudly.

You want everyone to hear what you have to say. Even if there's a microphone, some people may have difficulty hearing.

5) Smile.

You have been invited to share about the wonderful contributions that Soroptimist makes to your community and the world. Display your feelings through positive body language, and remember to stand up straight.

6) Take a break.

If you find yourself “hemming and hawing” because you've lost your train of thought, just pause for a second or two. This will help you to get your bearings and it might also provide a dramatic effect.

7) Mix it up.

To avoid a monotonous delivery, try to vary your intonation.

8) Breathe.

Taking a deep breath before you begin speaking will have a calming effect. Also, don't forget to keep breathing! Remember to take deep, regular breaths while delivering your speech. It can help you maintain a steady pace, while also keeping you relaxed while you present. It will also help with your tone, volume, and pitch, making your speech more impactful to the audience.

9) Hang on.

Lightly gripping the podium or lectern will give you a feeling of stability and help to ease your jitters.

10) Enjoy yourself.

Although public speaking can be stressful, remember you are speaking to a friendly audience. Enjoy communicating a positive message about Soroptimist and the opportunity to flex your public speaking skills.

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARDS SAMPLE SPEECH

Thank you for inviting me to be with you [today/tonight]. My name is [INSERT SPEAKER'S NAME] and I am a member of Soroptimist International of [INSERT CLUB NAME]. [Today/tonight], I want to tell you the story of a remarkable young woman named [INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME].

[INSERT RECIPIENT'S STORY IF SHE HAS GIVEN CONSENT:

Kathy was born and raised in the USA's Midwest. She was a nice girl and excellent student who dreamed of one day working in the medical profession. When she was 16, she met a man more than 10 years her senior. Kathy, a self-described "ugly duckling" was extremely flattered by Joe's attention. Soon she found herself pregnant, and against her parents' wishes, dropped out of high school to marry Joe. Kathy's childhood ended that year, and her dreams for the future were put on hold indefinitely.

Almost from the beginning, there were problems. Joe, who worked as a roofer, rarely finished a job. The family would move so he could find work, but he would inevitably lose his job. Meanwhile, Kathy struggled to feed and clothe their growing family, living mostly on public assistance.

Joe began drinking heavily and acting erratically. He would tell Kathy that he was going out to get gas, and then not come home all night. He became abusive. He wanted to know where Kathy was at all times, and wouldn't let her work—despite the family's need for additional income. He was controlling and full of rage—a far cry from the sweet-talking man who had promised to love and support her.

Kathy stayed with her husband for more than a decade. She felt sorry for him and thought it was her duty to take care of him, just as her mother had taken care of her father. Kathy also believed it was best for her kids to be with their dad—regardless of how flawed he might be. Most of all, Kathy was terrified of trying to make it on her own. She was a mother to five children, without even a high school education or any realistic way to provide for her family.

One night, Kathy reached her breaking point. The kids were in the living room working on a school project, laughing and having fun. Kathy's husband came in, drunk, and asked her to drive him to a bar. When she refused, he stormed from the house and proceeded to wreck their car.

That day, Kathy, who was 28 at the time, vowed that by the time she was 30, she would be living in different circumstances. A couple of weeks later, when her kids came home from school, Kathy told Joe they were leaving. She stuffed their belongings into bags, while her husband begged her to stay. Looking at her children, Kathy realized that she'd been doing them more harm than good by staying with Joe. Kathy and all five children moved into her sister's two-bedroom house and Kathy got a job at a pizza parlor making minimum wage—certainly not enough to make her dreams a possibility.

Some time later, Kathy was at a dental appointment. She was nervous after having not been to the dentist for many years, but the hygienist was nice and calmed her fears. Sitting in that chair, Kathy remembered her childhood ambition to enter into the medical profession, and thought to herself, "Maybe it's not too late."

Kathy spent the next several months researching the field of dental hygiene. She applied for government loans and grants, but they would only be enough to cover tuition. If she attended school full time, she wouldn't be able to work to supplement the public assistance. Uniforms, car repairs and upkeep, books, plus her family's regular expenses would stretch them to the breaking point. In addition, Kathy would have a two-hour commute—each way—to and from dental school.

But Kathy's dream would not be denied. She started school and worked as many hours as she could. One day, during her first year of school, one of Kathy's professors pointed out a notice with information about the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Kathy read the requirements and thought to herself, "That's me!" She filled out the application, beginning her personal essay with "The last 12 years of my life have been filled with many trials. ..."

Kathy's compelling story resulted in her receiving a cash award from the local Soroptimist club and later a \$5,000 award from the region level of our organization. Several months later she received a call from Soroptimist's president, who asked if she was sitting down. She told Kathy that she had been chosen to receive the \$10,000 finalist Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award*. "I was completely stunned," recalled Kathy. "I turned to my kids and told them the amazing news. Did we ever have a party that night ... screaming and jumping up and down!"

In a letter that Kathy wrote to us, she said: "This award helped me so much, not only financially, but emotionally. It helped me to believe that I really could make it. I don't know how we would have made it without Soroptimist's help. At last, my life, and the lives of my children had hope and direction."

Kathy went on to realize her dream of a career as a dental hygienist where she said she earned more working four days a week than she did in a whole month on public assistance. She met her current husband on one of her many trips to the hardware store. She and her husband, who live with their blended family in a country home on eight acres of land, later bought a hardware store. Kathy says that her story, including how she received the *Live Your Dream Award*, convinced the bank to finance the loan for the store.

"I've always heard that hard times build character," said Kathy. "If that's true, I must be quite a character by now," states Kathy. "But I know that I'm a better person for it. I'm stronger and I've learned a lot, like how to believe in myself. I have grown so much. I have a deeper sense of self-worth and a lot more confidence in myself. I feel a great deal of inner peace."

Isn't Kathy's story amazing? When I think about all the little things that get most of us down, it's hard to imagine overcoming the obstacles that Kathy did. She's not alone, though. She joins tens of thousands of women who, since 1972, have reclaimed their dreams with the help of a *Live Your Dream Award*. We are so proud of this program, and of the women who have the courage to transform their lives. They have hope and an undeniable belief in their dreams. They are an inspiration to women everywhere who are desperate to change their lives. Kathy has shared her experiences with many of her patients who were looking for hope and direction. "I impress upon them the importance of reaching for their dreams," she says.]

The *Live Your Dream Awards* are granted to women like **[INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME]** who have already decided to change their lives but lack the financial resources to do so. Award amounts vary at different levels of our organization, with three top finalist awards of \$10,000. Each year, over 2,000 women receive over \$2.8 million in cash awards through this Soroptimist program. The award is not a scholarship, and recipients may use the cash for any expense related to their efforts at gaining additional training or education. **[INSERT EXAMPLE:** Kathy used hers to keep her car running while she made that long commute back and forth from the dental school.] While the cash award is incredibly helpful, Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Award* recipients say that confidence and support they receive is equally meaningful.

As a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training, they need to achieve economic empowerment, Soroptimist believes in helping women to live their dreams by providing them with the resources they need to change their lives. We also believe that when you help a woman, you also help her family, the community, and the world. Despite the enormous progress that women have made, they still suffer disproportionately from poverty, illiteracy, violence, and discrimination. As women, we feel uniquely qualified to reach out to women the world over.

Maybe you know a woman who might be deserving of a *Live Your Dream Award*. Or maybe you work for an agency or a college whose constituents would be interested in this program. I urge you to contact us or to send these women our way.

I'd like to leave you with one last thought. Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. **[INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME]**'s dream was to get an education, earn a good living, and provide a good role model for her five children. Soroptimist's dream is to make sure that women like **[INSERT RECIPIENT'S NAME]** get the assistance and support they need. What's your dream?