



Soroptimist *Live Your Dream Awards* Region Instructions

A SOROPTIMIST RESOURCE FOR REGION CHAIRS

Important Deadlines

August 1

Online Application portal opens (US & Canada only)

November 15

Application deadline for club-level awards (online application portal closes for US & Canadian applicants—chairs can still access portal)

February 1

District-level judging deadline

February 15

Region-level judging deadline: All club recipients and/or district recipients must be received by this date for consideration for region-level awards.

March 15

Federation-level judging deadline: All region recipient information must be received at SIA headquarters by this date in order to enter first-place region recipients for consideration for federation judging. Region chairs must report through the [online reporting form](#).

Suggested Timetable of Region Program Activities

July

- Review club and region instructions thoroughly.
- Review region funding report so you know how many region awards you'll receive from SIA.
- If you have any questions about the instructions or your duties as region chair, contact the program department at SIA headquarters (program@soroptimist.org).
- Contact clubs in your region to ensure *Live Your Dream Awards* Club Chairs are up-to-date in the SIA club roster so the correct club member receives online applications (US & Canada only).
- Assist region board in identifying tactics to increase participation, awards, and funding given.

August

- Contact clubs to introduce yourself as region chair.
- Work with the region Program Chair to devise a strategy to promote the program, including region newsletter articles, social media posts, workshops, advertisements, and incentive ideas.

October/November

- Assist SIA headquarters in the distribution of online applications.
- Assist clubs with their recruitment efforts.
- Facilitate application sharing among clubs.

February/March

- Select judges, send out invitations, and plan the region judging event.

- Encourage all clubs to complete the [online reporting form](#) by the appropriate deadlines.
- Review all applications received from clubs for completeness and eligibility.
- Hold region judging to select finalists.
- Complete region-level reporting materials via [online reporting form](#) by March 15 deadline.

May

- Report to the region board on the status of tactics, the region performance, and begin planning for tactics for the next year.
- If it is the end of your term, support and train the incoming *Live Your Dream Award* chair.

Region Chair Instructions

As the *Live Your Dream Awards* Region Chair, you hold an important position in Soroptimist. The *Live Your Dream Awards* program is Soroptimist's cornerstone program and one of the chief mechanisms through which the organization works to achieve our Big Goal of investing in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education. These instructions highlight the five most important aspects of your position. Please read these instructions carefully and direct any questions to the program department at SIA headquarters (program@soroptimist.org).

I. Promoting the Program

Each year, it is SIA's goal to have every club in the federation participate in the *Live Your Dream Awards* and to serve more women. These goals cannot be reached without your assistance. You are the central force encouraging clubs to participate and give more awards. The following suggestions will be helpful in promoting the program and ensuring more women have access to this opportunity:

- Per the SIA Board's decision, clubs will only be counted as participating in the *Live Your Dream Awards* if they are distributing a cash award. If clubs are not distributing a cash award, it will impact your region-level participation rates and the funding distributed by SIA to support region awards.
- Devise tactics to increase participation that will work in your community. Incorporate checkpoints throughout the year to be sure that you are executing the identified tactics.
- Look to clubs that have had success in achieving high numbers of applicants and increasing their number of awards given and ask them to share what has made them successful. Their methods could inspire future tactics and help achieve the Big Goal!
- Use region meetings as an opportunity for clubs to share tactics that have increased their number of applications or ability to distribute more awards. Encourage club leaders to adopt a formal plan of tactics that they will utilize to increase their impact (especially for clubs that saw a decrease in awards distributed or who did not give out any awards last year).
- Check in with clubs throughout the year to see how they are doing with their tactics and brainstorm ways to overcome any obstacles that they may encounter.
- If you have received a signed media release form from past region award recipients, write an article for your region newsletter about your region's past recipients. Explain how the award has made a difference in their lives.
- Contact club chairs to introduce yourself, and ask that they update their online club roster with their chair information so that communications are sent directly to them.
- Place an advertisement in your region newsletter that includes region and/or district deadlines.
- Make contact with clubs in your region. In regions with districts, ask the district chairs to assist you. Keep track of the club chairs and encourage clubs who do not have plans to participate to do so.
- Make a special effort with clubs that did not participate in the previous club year.
- If a club that did not participate is geographically near to one that did, enlist the help of the latter's *Live Your Dream Awards* club chair to encourage the club to begin participating and assist them in setting up the program.
- Consider adding an incentive to recognize clubs that distributed the most awards, the most funding, or saw the biggest increase in number of awards distributed.

- Reach out to newly participating clubs in your region. Congratulate and thank them for participating so they feel acknowledged and encouraged to participate again, and to increase their reach next year.

Be creative in promoting this program and developing ideas that will work best in your region. If you have had particular success with a promotion and with serving a larger number of women through the *Live Your Dream Awards*, share it with others by contacting the program department at program@soroptimist.org.

New Club Funding

Increasing the number of women who receive a *Live Your Dream Award* is a priority for SIA to reach our Big Goal of investing in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education. To this end, SIA headquarters sends a promotional package of information to new clubs encouraging them to participate in the program. New clubs are also offered \$1,000 from SIA to fund their first recipient (all funds must go directly to the recipient and only to one recipient).

Beyond a Cash Award

In addition to increasing the number of women who receive an award, increasing the impact of the award on recipients is also a priority. The resource [Beyond a Cash Award](#) was created to help clubs creatively and effectively offer their recipients additional, non-cash support ranging from childcare to tax and financial advice.

II. Assisting Clubs

Women in all areas of the federation are eligible for this award; it is part of your job as the *Live Your Dream Awards* region chair to assist clubs in finding them. There are five ways you can support clubs that are having trouble finding applicants:

1. Review the tips in the [club participation toolkit](#) and make sure the club has tried these methods.
2. Make sure the club has updated their club roster with their *Live Your Dream Awards* club chair so online applications may be sent directly to this individual.
3. Work with SIA Headquarters to ensure all clubs are using the online application portal (US & Canada only)
4. Facilitate the sharing of applications between clubs. If a club has received eligible applications from women who they will not be honoring, those applications can be redistributed to other clubs for judging.
5. Encourage clubs to include applications from outside their communities.

If a question arises you cannot answer, call or email the program department at headquarters or ask the club to contact headquarters (LYDAwards@soroptimist.org or <mailto:program@soroptimist.org>).

III. Applications

The *Live Your Dream Awards* application is available online via the [Soroptimist website](#). Applications for the US and Canada are sent directly to the *Live Your Dream Awards* club chair's online application portal. Applications submitted to SIA headquarters for all other regions and territories will be forwarded to the region chair for disbursement to a club.

Key messages for clubs in North America

We ask that you review and share the below messages with clubs regarding this new process.

- The application portal process has been created by SIA headquarters as a method for clubs to receive applications.
- Clubs should annually update their club roster with their *Live Your Dream Awards* club chair to ensure applications are being received by the appropriate club member.
- If a club is unable to include applications received via the application portal, the club **must** notify SIA headquarters so the applications can be judged either at headquarters or by another club.
- SIA headquarters received feedback over the years that led to these changes:
 - From Applicants - the writeable PDFs are confusing; it's a different process from other scholarship or grant applications
 - From References - I'd like to submit my completed reference directly to Soroptimist, not back to the applicant

- From Club Chairs - the blank and incomplete applications are frustrating and the back and forth with applicants is time-consuming; we want a tool where we can log in and all applications are in one place
- SIA headquarters has made the following changes:
 - For Applicants
 - Online application form does not require any downloads of Adobe Reader, saving PDFs to desktop, and uploading materials
 - Online application form similar to other scholarship or grant applications
 - Save progress and return to application later to complete
 - Receive email reminders to complete application as deadline approaches
 - For References
 - Complete online reference form
 - Submit directly to Soroptimist, does not get returned to applicant
 - For Club Chairs
 - Receive email notification when a new application has been submitted to club
 - Can log in to portal at any time to see all applications submitted to club
 - Can request additional information from applicant directly in application portal
 - Can send email notifications to applicants once decisions are made
 - Can advance club recipient to region level judging through portal
- Encourage use of online application so:
 - All applications are collected in one place (per club chairs' request)
 - We're using an application system applicants and references are more comfortable with
 - Our federation can move towards a unified process of delivering our cornerstone program using our time and technology resources in a more efficient way that will allow us to reach more women
- Applications will not technically go "through" SIA headquarters, as staff at headquarters will not interact with the club applications. The application portal will automatically direct applications to respective club chair accounts. SIA headquarters will not process the applications for completeness or eligibility; the applications will be the clubs' and the portal is a tool for clubs to use to more efficiently collect applications.
- Clubs are encouraged to use the provided flyer to advertise the *Awards* in their communities; we recommend using the 'Notes' section to include instructions to applicants to select that individual club when submitting their application.
- Clubs with extended deadlines may opt to use the writeable PDFs, but it is becoming increasingly important for all clubs/regions to operate with the same deadlines so we can leverage technology and lay groundwork that will allow us to provide more awards to more women throughout all of our countries and territories.
- There are resources to help clubs learn this new process, including [a training video](#) for members to watch at their convenience and a "Help" section specifically for club chairs within the application portal. Additionally, members can send questions or concerns to lydawards@soroptimist.org.
- Clubs that have received several applications may share applications with other clubs that are in need of applications. Clubs can submit a request to share applications by completing this [Application Share form](#).

Judging at SIA Headquarters

Applicants without a nearby club are included in the SIA Headquarters judging. Each year, a designated number of \$1,000 awards are given to applicants in this pool. These applicants are then included in an additional level of judging at SIA Headquarters that is comparable to a region level judging.

Clubs that have not received any applications may request some applications from those submitted to SIA Headquarters. To do so, complete this [Application Request form](#).

IV. Coordinating Region Judging

Each year, region awards are based on the number of awards that clubs in the region distribute the previous club year. Each region receives a \$5,000 award and additional \$3,000 awards based on club award distribution in the Region from the previous club year. If you are unsure of the number of region awards your region will receive, please confirm with SIA's program department (lydawards@soroptimist.org).

Steps to conducting region judging:

1. Receive applications from clubs/districts from the Application Portal.
2. Confirm applications meet eligibility requirements.
3. Invite a judging panel.
4. Select a first-place recipient and any additional recipients (to receive \$3,000 awards) to submit to headquarters.
5. Complete the "Decision Form" within the Application Portal for each club/district level recipient.
6. Contact all applicants to notify them about the outcome of the judging (via Application Portal, or personal email/letter or phone call).

Eligibility

As you receive applications via the online reporting form from clubs or districts, review each one, checking to make sure it is complete and that the applicant is eligible. To be eligible for region-level judging, each club must submit either the **original application or a copy, a completed online form which includes the list of club recipients**. If any of these items are missing, please contact the club chair and ask that she provide the missing information. Club-level recipients must meet *all* eligibility requirements in order for the club to be considered participating in the program. However, do not assume that because the applicant has won on the club-level that they are eligible. Any incomplete or ineligible applications should not be included in the region judging. Check the following:

- Each question is answered.
- The applicant resides in one of SIA's member countries or territories.
- The application is signed.
- The applicant is a woman with **primary** financial responsibility for herself and her dependents. Dependents do not need to be children.
- The applicant demonstrates financial need.
- The applicant has been accepted, or is enrolled and will still be attending an undergraduate degree or vocational skills training program. High school completion programs and online programs are eligible. She should not graduate before the federation judging in May. (Judges at the federation-level question the need of awarding \$10,000 to a woman who has already graduated.)
- The applicant is not enrolled in a graduate degree program. However, applicants who already hold an undergraduate degree are eligible to apply if they are pursuing another undergraduate degree or are entering a training program.
- The applicant does not have a graduate degree.
- The applicant has not previously been the recipient of a *Live Your Dream Award* or Women's Opportunity Award.

Soroptimists, employees of Soroptimist, members of Soroptimist sponsored groups, and immediate family members of Soroptimists are ineligible for the award. Previous recipients are also ineligible. Immediate family is defined to include parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, or spouse/partner by adoption, blood, or marriage.

NOTE: To ensure an applicant has not applied to and received an award from more than one club, please compare the names of the club award recipients. If you have found a duplicate, please contact SIA Headquarters.

Selecting Judges

Invite three to five non-Soroptimists to judge your region competition. Try to select people who work with women in some capacity. For example, invite employees of domestic violence shelters, transitional housing projects, women's centers at local colleges, or other non-profit organizations that assist women. Most women are honored to participate in the program. The selection of outstanding, well-known, and qualified women from the community to serve as judges will help educate the community about this project and will add prestige to the program.

Selecting Finalists

Regions must use the same judging criteria as clubs. This is also the criteria used at the federation-level. Region first place recipients will receive a monetary award of US \$5,000. If your region is eligible for additional awards, recipients will each receive awards of US \$3,000. Eligibility for additional US \$3,000 awards is dependent on the number of club awards distributed within your region the previous year. Regions may decide for themselves whether to provide additional monetary or non-monetary awards beyond what is funded by SIA Headquarters. First place region recipients will be eligible for federation-level judging. Three federation finalists will be selected and given an additional award of US \$10,000. This structure cannot be altered by regions. The region's first place recipients will be entered into the federation-level judging.

Remember to schedule the judging at a convenient time, keep it as short as possible, and send the judges thank-you notes. Consider inviting them to your region conference.

Contacting ALL Applicants

Once region recipients have been selected, submit region finalist materials to SIA Headquarters – see next section below for details. Then notify the remaining applicants who were *not* selected for a region-level award. It is important to applicants that they be notified of the outcome of the award. Furthermore, it is important to the reputation of the club and the organization that all applicants are contacted. You may use the Application Portal to send notification, or you may adapt the following to a letter or phone script for applicants:

Dear Anna,

Thank you for submitting an application for the 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,

V. Submitting Information to Headquarters

The deadline for submission of region finalists to the federation for judging is **March 15**. Applications received after that date will not be included in the federation judging. It is crucial that this information be received at headquarters on time to enable us to process and send certificates, letters, and funds to region governors before region conferences. These presentation packets will not be sent until everything has been received at headquarters.

Please respect the March 15 deadline. To be included in the federation judging you **MUST** submit the following to headquarters via [online reporting form](#):

- The names and originating club name of all region level finalists (regions will not need to upload copies of the application to their form, as they club should have done that. Be sure that the club submitted a complete application!).
- The **COMPLETED** [region reporting form](#).

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARDS REGION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit entries electronically via [online reporting form](#)—entries submitted by postal mail or emailed old transmittal forms will NOT be accepted. SIA Headquarters uses this information to compile reports for the Soroptimist Board of Directors. Information about participating clubs and money distributed is very important in measuring the impact of the program. Please fill out the form, completing all the information requested. If you are depending on district chairs to supply the requested information, please contact them directly. SIA Headquarters does not have contact with the district chairs; this is the responsibility of the region chair.

NOTE: SIA will process region finalist award materials and send all award materials to region governors for presentation at region conferences.

First place region entries received by March 15 and accompanied by a completed reporting form will be considered for the federation judging. The judging committee consists of non-Soroptimists who select three \$10,000 federation finalists. After the judging, the federation president will notify the finalists and the appropriate region governors.

Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards: Judging 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 two references 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.					
Both references are supportive of the applicant.					
APPLICANT'S TOTAL SCORE:					