



Sewa-Aifw (Asian Indian Family Wellness), INC.

6645 James Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55430

MN Non-Profit 501C3

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To: Rep Fue Lee

Chair Capitol Investment Funding Project

SEWA-Aifw serves a community with origins in 7 Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Ayana, and Sri Lanka diaspora) And now Afghanistani Refugees. It is a challenge to directly survey the ethnic populations in the community. Data from the 2015-2016 MN Dept of Education report on languages spoken in the home reported 8,173 students spoke a South Asian language; 97% of these students live in the seven-county metro area. Between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian population in Minnesota doubled. The 2020 Census recorded a total South Asian population

just over 52,000. The significant growth of the South Asian population continues. According to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), Asian Indians (alone) are the second largest Asian population in Minnesota, numbering 52,000 plus the most common languages, other than English, spoken by South Asians in the United States are Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Telegu, Nepalese, Karen, and Urdu. Local estimates are that 80,000 - 92,000 South Asians live in MN. The majority (75%) of South Asians in the United States are foreign-born. The immigration status of South Asian individuals is varied from spousal visas to U.S. Citizenship. South Asians are the second largest Asian Immigrant Refugee populations in the Twin Cities. Sewa-aifw is the only culturally specific service provider in the Twin Cities.

Community. Describe your community's needs and opportunities as they relate to your proposal.
Community

South Asians in the United States are foreign-born. The immigration status of South Asian individuals is varied from spousal visas to U.S. citizenship. There have been a wide variety of resettlement experiences for South Asian immigrants to the U.S. in the different waves of migration from the 1890s to the 2000s. Additionally, work skills varied greatly in each wave. Though there are many who enjoy success, others with limited language or work skills, or those who are elderly have not had great success. Currently 7.8% of the South Asian community in Minnesota lives in poverty. The diversity within the South Asian community presents challenges of differing languages and the limited availability of culture/language specific services. A lack of service providers who understand cultural proscriptions related to issues like food consumption or gender relationships. Project SAHAT found the three most cited barriers to seeking medical care were: inability to navigate the system or don't understand what services are covered (18%); health care providers do not understand South Asian culture (8%); lack health

insurance (6%). Chronic health conditions (diabetes and heart disease) and mental health issues are prevalent in the community as its members are transitioning from cultural traditions of the country where they were born to the cultural norms of the United States. These transitions and changing norms affect family/marital relationships, health and wellness, economic wellbeing, and social interactions. A huge challenge for the community is helping its members to understand how centuries old cultural practices and behaviors need to change to eliminate the conditions that create violence and specifically domestic violence. The mindsets and roles of men and women will both need to change as men recognize and respect the value of women, and women are in a better position to achieve their full potential

In 2004 Started with 1.5 staff now Sewa-aifw after 17 years has grown to 17.38 staff and growing.

Sewa-Aifw and wellness: Family values are being challenged related to the concept of “shame” and practice of shaming. The opportunity is that since 2004 SEWA has worked diligently to create systems change. The organization has developed a network of South Asian medical professionals that creates access to health care for the insured and by working with their employer’s/associates to provide pro bono/charity care to individuals who do not have health insurance. SEWA is providing a monthly health clinic in three religious organizations’ space. Men are now serving on SEWA’s board of directors. South Asians are recognized and included in research projects on the Asian community in Minnesota. A network of survivors of domestic violence, community members and health professionals has come together to work at the community level to directly address change in the legacy culture that creates violence in families and develop new community norms. SEWA’s work to-date has built a network of individuals who are committed to total wellness within the Twin Cities Metro South Asian community. SEWA has been able to increase its funding to work with members of the South Asian community, yet flexibility is needed to address immediate needs of families, emerging issues, and organizational challenges.

2. Our work? Describe the specific work and activities you propose and how they will move your community forward in ways that complement the Trust's vision of healthy, vibrant communities as places where basic needs are met, mutual regard is prized and opportunities for economic, civic, and social participation are within everyone's reach.

Proposed Work

1: SEWA is focused on improving social determinants of health, promoting health and wellness for all generations in the South Asian community through two program areas and to work at the environmental and policy level on issues of concern to the community.

2: The Healthy Families program: Reduces violence within the community through direct support to individuals/families experiencing violence and through education for victims/ survivors, community members and professionals. 24/7 crisis line 952-912-9100 addresses 400 calls per year. 70% are domestic violence,

3: The Health Initiative: Improves wellness and promotes healing through health clinics, senior and youth activities. Free health clinics held in three locations, reach over 100 individuals each month. They provide 1) primary screenings, such as glucose testing; 2) ECG screenings with a cardiologist volunteer; 3) consultations to help individuals understand the result of the tests and to provide nutrition counseling; and 4) referrals to health care professionals who understand the culture and language of the individual seeking services. If a patient is not insured, many health care professionals to whom patients are referred, provide low - cost or “charity care”.

4: Supports girl’s leadership activities, and a youth soccer program for boys and girls. Aids the youth’s families as needs are identified.

5: Engages seniors in educational and social activities and provides transportation to the free health clinics and other locations. SEWA recognizes that total wellness cannot be achieved unless community members have basic needs met - food, shelter, clothing, health care. As SEWA has increased its programs, the needs that families face that fall in gaps between program services become more apparent.

SEWA is working to maintain and improve its general operations, so that it operates more effectively and maintain flexibility to provide creative solutions and services, to address individual needs. To ensure that individuals and families in the South Asian community with limited resources can feed their family, find shelter, and create a stable environment for their family, so adults can find and maintain work, children can be safe and continue their education, and seniors have a place to stay, food, social activities.

As the community moves toward total family wellness, there is an immediate need to provide support to individuals and families that are facing a situation where their journey toward wellness is disrupted and extra help with basic needs is required to provide stability in the short term so the journey can continue. SEWA assists individuals from youth to seniors when they are experiencing a shortage of food, a lack of medical care, transitions in living, and need for relief from violence in the home. As SEWA supports short-term needs, it continues to work at the community level to eliminate violence and change norms to bring “total wellness” to the community.

The two-pronged approach works from the ground up with individual and families making change, and at the same time from the top down to change norms in the community. Addressing issues from both directions at the same time, provides support for individuals/ families who are working to change values and behaviors about behaviors in relationships, for seniors about choosing healthier foods to manage diabetes, and for youth to choose education and positive leadership, while living in a community that has for centuries lived with a different set of values and behaviors. At the same time, every individual and family that makes conscious decisions to change behaviors, contributes to a change in mindset and values for the community as-a-whole. SEWA works at multiple levels, individual, family, organization, and community to create a community with values that can lead to total wellness for everyone.

3. Impact.

SEWA is committed to working in the South Asian community to achieve total family wellness. The organization tracks and measures short-term accomplishments but remains focused on the long-term outcomes. Each program has specific program goals and outcomes. Measures include both qualitative and quantitative measures. The success of each program is reported to the community each year. The success of the organization is measured in progress toward organizational goals. These measures include number of community members served; increases in culturally appropriate services or decreases in the need for a service; changes in community attitudes and behaviors; increased knowledge in mainstream entities about the South Asian community and SEWA's accomplishments, which is often recognized through speaking engagements and awards.

Organizational goals are longer-term and require some retrospective analysis to identify change and progress. For example, for 17 years SEWA has worked on the issue of domestic violence in the South Asian community. In 2018, a group of South Asian individuals asked SEWA to work with them at the community level to address the legacy culture that leads to violence in relationships. This is an indicator of success, when former clients become leaders, willing to share stories with the community that provide an example of how change can occur in a relationship or family.

SEWA recognizes that its significant increase in funding over the last year, is a sign of success. It knows that going forward it needs to maintain the quality of its programs to ensure future funding.

SEWA keeps the South Asian community and its partners and stakeholders informed about the work it does and its accomplishments.

Many communication channels are used to share results. The organization's website reports on program activities and provides annual summaries of program and organization accomplishments. Each year, at the annual Gala, a report on the organization, its priorities, accomplishments, and issues are shared through a PowerPoint presentation and video. Written and verbal reports are shared with

stakeholder groups, as appropriate. SEWA also uses social media and connections to other organizations and events to share information on its work and its success.

SEWA is experienced in collecting, compiling, and reporting evaluation data. SEWA has staff, consultants and volunteers who are experienced in evaluation. An evaluation consultant assists with development of evaluation plans and analysis of data and outcomes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QzOfGEm24E> Basic needs in Covid-19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOKpMtp9lLg> Need for space. Temporary spaces in Temples.

4. Sewa-Aifw **resources**

SEWA-AIFW, Inc. is committed to bringing 'Total Family Wellness' to the South Asian community in Minnesota. Our vision: Envisioning a South Asian community that is healthy and violence-free, with self-determined women and engaged and supported elders and families.

To achieve this vision SEWA promotes research, communication, advocacy, and direct service for medical and quality of life issues experienced by South Asian families. SEWA's work is based on social determinants of health and guided by the belief that creating new and sustaining positive environments in a culturally specific way has 1) a significant impact on the community's health, and 2) community members have the power to influence the environment and culture.

Overall goals of the organization:

- 1) Assist community members in achieving "total wellness";
- 2) Create change in the community, so women can achieve "total wellness" and centuries old cultural practices and behaviors that impede women are banished.
- 3) Increase availability and access to culturally appropriate services for South Asians.
- 4) Increase individuals' feeling of security and safety in the home and community;
- 5) Engage community members in creating social connections that maintain an environment that supports healthy living.

6) Ensure that policymakers and human service providers are aware of the needs of South Asian community members.

Staff includes: The Executive Director provides oversight to all organizational operations and staff. She also works with each program to use her community connections to increase program visibility and provides presentations to many different groups of professionals. A program coordinator oversees daily implementation of activities in each program area. The coordinator works with program staff to plan and implement activities that will achieve program objectives. Community Specialists/Advocates implement activities in the South Asian community as outlined in the workplan for each program area.

The board of directors are active and engaged in supporting the organization and its services, and ensure the organization stays within its mission which provides guidance for its work.

SEWA works across generations, economic status, religious and social groups to create an environment in which the many diverse South Asian immigrants in Minnesota, feel welcomed and safe. Current programs address the issue of violence in families, provide outreach for the SNAP food program, work at the community level to address legacy issues which impact violence, support girls' leadership and both girls' and boys' soccer teams, provide transportation, social activities, and access to health care for seniors.

Stakeholders in our work include the community members served, youth and seniors, individuals and families experiencing or recovering from domestic violence, volunteers from the community and from local educational institutions, local law enforcement and judicial entities who rely on our capabilities to effectively serve South Asians, the networks in which we are members, local health professionals and?

providers, organizations who assist individuals dealing with violence, employers and government entities who are seeking to understand and respond to issues affecting the South Asian community.

SEWA works with trained volunteers, who are members of the community being served, which is a key factor in the success of SEWA

programs. SEWA also engages students in health-related fields in its work, so they can become familiar with the issues faced by South

Asians and know how to connect them to available services.

SEWA fills a gap that other service providers cannot fill, connecting the diverse South Asian population to services and professionals who

understand the cultural traditions and speak the language of those needing services.

One change since SEWA last applied for funding from Otto Bremer is that the organization grown in the last year, obtaining

additional state and federal funding. 2020 will be SEWA's first year operating with the challenges of significant growth in government

funding and all its requirements for each program. Having some flexible funding seems prudent to be able to address organizational or

program issues that arise in this first year.

5. Partners and networks. Describe the others you propose to work with to accomplish your goals. What is your organization's history with these partners, and how will they?

contribute to your work?

Partners and networks

SEWA works with many partners and multiple networks to develop access to resources that meet the many differing needs of South Asian families. SEWA provides food to the families of children in its girls' leadership programs in partnership with CAPI's Asian food shelf, it provides food and assists in finding housing for women who are fleeing violence, and it assists seniors by providing food in emergencies and connecting seniors to available food resources (Manna Market, Second Harvest, Asian food shelves, etc.). SEWA, in partnership with a U of MN faculty member, has developed DESI plate, based on USDA's My Plate, to help South Asian individuals identify healthy Asian foods. Also, a nutritionist provides individual counseling at all SEWA's health clinics to help individuals who have heart disease, diabetes or other health issues learn how their choices in food can affect their disease, and to improve understanding of what foods are better to eat to help with a specific health issue.

SEWA fills a gap that other service providers cannot fill, connecting the diverse South Asian population to services and professionals who understand the cultural traditions and speak the language of those needing services. Staff and volunteers speak the following languages:

Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Telegu, Urdu, Nepalese and English. SEWA also works to develop tools and resources to assist the community in moving toward wellness. Examples include Project SAHAT (South Asian Health Assessment Tool), a unique project that surveyed Minnesota South Asian adults about health issues and access to health care. Results are used to advocate for changes to improve access and care. As a participant in the The Refugee Immigrant Women for Social Change (RIWC) initiative developed, a RIWC Gender Tool Kit, a booklet that helps an organization examine and challenge assumptions related to gender that are driving its activities. SEWA supports the local Asian women's shelter and the Asian food bank. More recently SEWA worked with students at Bethel College to survey 1,000 South Asians about issues affecting them. Also, SEWA works at the policy level, working with local government, law enforcement and judicial systems, and national and international immigration systems to protect victims of violence.

SEWA works with partners in law enforcement and the judicial system, with networks in housing and shelter, food resources and health care, and women's issues. SEWA brings its expertise regarding the South Asian community and domestic violence prevention to these partners and networks. It gains knowledge about resources that its clients can utilize on their journey to total wellness, and through participation in networks it strengthens referral networks and increases access to services for clients.

6. Looking ahead. How do you anticipate your community will change in the coming years? How will your work and organization evolve to fit those changes?

Looking ahead

SEWA has total wellness for all individuals as a guiding principle for its organization. It anticipates a future in which the threat of violence will be banished from families' homes and the community. It sees a future in which youth, adults and seniors have access to a place to call home, food they like, and affordable health care, so they can live with stability and wellness in their lives. SEWA expects a more engaged South Asian community to address issues both within the community and in the neighborhoods and larger communities in which people live.

The South Asian community is often viewed as the "model minority" consisting only of highly paid professionals, but the immigration story of the community which arrived in waves of immigration over more than 100 years, is that there are great disparities within the community.

Project SAHAT documented health disparities, a high rate of diabetes especially in low-income families and seniors, a high level of heart disease, and a lack of nutrition education that acknowledges a vegetarian diet and other cultural and religious issues around food. The violence prevention programs document the disparities within the community related to domestic violence, and research shows that 3 of 5 women experience violence in their lifetime.

SEWA is leading efforts that address these issues and expects over the next 5-15 years that attitudes with change and will continue to work on changes in community norms that lead to a healthier lifestyle and total family wellness. Since March of 2020 there is surge in racial tensions and xenophobia. Our community is confronted in stores racial slurs such as "Go back to where you came from".

A key strategy that SEWA uses in its work is to bring together individuals of different language, religious, economic, and social backgrounds to work together. This creates a pathway to greater understanding of those who have different cultural and religious backgrounds and allows for a natural learning process that helps individuals to identify similarities and common interests. The anticipated result is change in how community members view each other and the members of the larger community in which they live and work. Continuous change in the community is expected. SEWA will continue identify and address legacies that impede total wellness, emerging trends, emerging leaders, and issues that are barriers or those that can be a strong foundations foundation for positive change for individuals and the community. SEWA will continue to look for

opportunities to support individuals and families so they can change their circumstances, provide leadership, and create and maintain strong support networks within the South Asian community.

SEWA's role will remain flexible to address each issue in a manner that builds a stronger community and support total family wellness.

7. **Anything else.** Is there anything else we should know to understand your proposal and its potential impact for your community?

Anything else

Yes, all the above cannot happen unless Sewa-Aifw has space a space where our community can turn to. Where women domestic violence can come to for safe space in a language they understand, so many arrests can be avoided if only they could be understood. Sewa-Aifw has partnered with MDH, and Hennepin County to bring trusted messages across our communities. TPT and Sewa-aifw are partners in translating and bringing emergency preparedness to our communities, via social media.

In 2020/21, SEWA reached over 23000 individuals in 10 programs and through social media activities. Programs included: Domestic Violence Prevention, Injury prevention, Senior's program, Youth leadership and sports, free Health clinics, Lead hazard education, Census education/outreach, women's support, And now Newly arrival of Afghan Refugees, outreach at community events for all programs, training of professionals program serves low-income, vulnerable seniors, age 60 and older, in the South Asian community. The Awaz program seeks to bring Total Family Wellness to seniors by ensuring they have connections to other people who understand their culture, that they can communicate in their preferred language, have transportation to get to appointments, and are able to obtain services, like SNAP, for which they are qualified. It conducts outreach in the community, seeking to connect with the most isolated seniors and those with limited incomes. Awaz works with seniors, men, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals, to ensure that they can stay in their homes, maintain their cultural traditions, access needed resources to support wellness, and stay connected to the community.

SEWA is seeking Space so we have a consistent space where this community of 92,000 plus can call it a GO TO Place. The increase in request for services has gone up 200%.

Sewa-aifw chose a building, signed purchase agreement, bank financing was all done, after 7 months of stringing us, the seller decided not to sell. We are in shock; bank is in shock. The seller shared with our agent he is not sure if he is going to let us put a kitchen, the smell of food around the area he does not like and he decided not to sell. But to Sewa he gave a different reason, of his business plans have changed. This action put us in great difficulty because all summer we were providing cultural food from a garage to meet the basic need of our community. Esp. our seniors.

Brief Description of Project:

The goal of Sewa-Aifw is to ensure that Seniors, children and families, especially low-income, isolated individuals, in the South Asian community can successfully navigate community systems and obtain culturally specific services that close the gap in health disparities. This wellness service center will assist them in continuing to address their health and human services need. 90% of seniors served live below the federal

poverty level, and 99% of seniors served are considered vulnerable. SEWA expects that South Asian seniors served by this program will: 1) Better maintain their wellness due to services provided at the service center with free health clinics and culturally specific mental health services, where they can use their preferred language, and access to culturally preferred/familiar foods through cultural pantry also at sight; 2) Have an improved sense of wellbeing due to more social interactions with peers on a regular basis; 3) Live independently for a longer time in the home of their choice; 4) Become more engaged in the community, better understand community issues, through education and information provided in their preferred language.

Activities that will be carried out in the Service center will include: 1) Provide South Asian seniors with assistance in their preferred language, so they can learn about community resources and connect to needed services; 2) Adapt/ translate and distribute language/culture-specific educational materials (e.g., elder abuse inside the home, legal and immigration issues - help and resources) and brochures and community events/ activities all under one roof. 3) Program will include and coordinate monthly trips to Asian grocery stores and food shelves to ensure seniors have access to culturally preferred foods; 4) Coordinate monthly trips to free health clinics.

5) Stay in touch with seniors with chronic conditions and help them to remember keep up with health maintenance appointments and/or go to the free health clinic where they can complete testing for diabetes, hypertension, and heart health with no cost, and have a free consultation with a nutritionist who volunteers her time. Volunteer physicians will visit the center to address issues and refer to federally funded clinics. 6) Plan and implement monthly social and educational events for seniors. 7) Encourage seniors and family members to find ways to reduce loneliness and boredom that some seniors experience. 8) Engage seniors in ethnic community events, so they can remain connected to their culture and community.

SEWA provides programming at community locations, such as, senior housing communities, Hindi, and Sikh temples. Access to culturally preferred foods is provided through trips to the Asian Food Shelf at CAPIUSA and South Asian groceries stores and in summer Farmer's market. All this will happen at one place. It is essential community has a space to come to.

A trusted messaging site. During all this pandemic time South Asian had no testing center. Community was calling Sewa-Aifw, and we were referring them to different sites. This was a challenging time. With George Floyd riots, our office was in proximity, we had to rescue women and children from Shelter to a safe hotel. The trauma, uncertainty, and insecurity along with anxiety that brought isolation and depression all our staff was front line workers, to provide food, cultural pantry, and PPE material; Weekly 500 meals are provides since March of 2020. And we still are adding more people to ever growing need.

The program coordinators, assisted by trained volunteers, carry out these activities. SEWA thrives because of volunteers and community support. Volunteers with different language skills connect with seniors in different languages. Volunteers also connect generations.

Sewa-Aifw volunteers visit seniors and make telephone assurance calls, deliver groceries stories. Volunteers also work with seniors and hold zoom social hour. Volunteer nursing students from area colleges are putting a plan together to meet seniors in their homes for chronic disease education and prevention. SEWA is fortunate to have faculty members at two local colleges assisting with community surveys and developing culturally specific teaching aides, such as, DESI plate (the Asian Indian version of USDA's MyPlate) which was developed by a college researcher, for SEWA to help Asians manage their diet to reduce the effects of chronic disease. All

this support is in place to assist seniors who need help. Currently over 35 active volunteers are providing services to seniors.

In 2019/2020, SEWA served 796 seniors across the Twin Cities Metro area. The Awaze a Senior Journey program coordinates with Title III transportation providers, the Metro Area Agency on Aging and other senior programs; the free health clinics that SEWA provides and other health care providers who have staff prepared to work with South Asian seniors; it is part of the MN SNAP outreach network; connected through SEWA to the Asian food shelf; it works with housing providers that have high concentrations of seniors; and, with SEWA's domestic violence prevention program. The increased outreach to low-income South Asian seniors through the additions, in 2019/2020, of SNAP outreach and Title III transportation to the Awaze program services has significantly increased the number of seniors who are seeking assistance from SEWA.

Request: Sewa-Aifw is seeking support for the "Sewa-Aifw Social services Center for cultural services" program.

Thank you for your consideration.

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