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CELAP Final Evaluation Report

December 2023



center for nonprofit
advancement

Funding Provided by:

JPMORGAN CHASE & Co.

Celebration at Chase Skyland neighborhood location, Washington, DC



A – BACKGROUND

The Center for Nonprofit Advancement (the Center), located in Washington, DC, is committed to the vibrancy of nonprofit organizations that work on a range of critical social, health, and environmental issues. It provides capacity-building, training, networking, and other services to strengthen the nonprofit sector as a whole and help individual nonprofit organizations meet our most vulnerable populations' needs. Supported by a JP Morgan Chase grant, the Center developed and administered the Chief Executive Leaders Ascend Program (CELAP) program to serve eight Black women-led nonprofit organizations working east of the Anacostia river in Washington, DC. The Center commissioned NNR Evaluation, Planning & Research to conduct an external evaluation of the project's first cohort. This is the final Year 1 evaluation report, which contains a summary of program results and a list of recommendations.

A.1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The CELAP project aims to support Black women who are leading grassroots nonprofit agencies in southeast Washington, DC. The first cohort was inducted into the program in the summer of 2023 and concluded program activities in December 2023. Working with the team at JPMorgan Chase, the Center created and implemented an eligibility criteria, screening, and an interview process for potential participants. As a result, eight nonprofit organizations were selected to receive training and capacity-building assistance through CELAP. **See Appendix 1** for more details on each participating organization.

The CELAP program comprises several **program components**: a formal readiness and capacity-building assessment; 16 group capacity-building sessions; individual and group wellness coaching; a grant of \$25,000 per organization (unrestricted funds); informal advice and coaching from the program staff at the Center for Nonprofit Advancement; networking with other community leaders; and liaising with JPMorgan Chase team members. For a sense of the program's content, **see Figure 1** for a list of the topics covered during the group sessions.

Date	Group Sessions
April 19, 2023	Wellness Session, Unchained Visioning with Erika Totten
April 26, 2023	Nonprofit Financial Bootcamp with A. Michael Gellman, CPA, CGMA
May 10, 2023	Strategic Management for Nonprofit and Public Organizations with Robert Sheehan
June 7, 2023	Fundraising Planning for Nonprofits with Maisha Armstrong
June 12, 2023	Nurturing Success: Cultivating Networks and Fundraising Strategies for Black Women Nonprofit Leaders with Ebonie Johnson Cooper
June 15, 2023	Wellness Session, Unchained Visioning with Erika Totten
June 22, 2023	Group Brainstorm
July 20, 2023	Developing and Managing Corporate Partnerships with Siannah Marcellin
July 27, 2023	Focus Group with NNR Evaluation
July 28, 2023	Group Brainstorm
August 2, 2023	Technology for Nonprofit Efficiency with Akeem Cherry
August 9, 2023	Mid-Point Evaluation with NNR Evaluation
August 16, 2023	Wellness Session, Unchained Visioning with Erika Totten
October 4, 2023	Wellness Session, Unchained Visioning with Erika Totten
October 25, 2023	Wellness Session, Unchained Visioning Final Assessment
December 5, 2023	Virtual Logic Model Training with Brighter Strategies

Figure 1. Group Sessions

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (continued)

The **results of the need assessment** indicate that the organizations were working on building up their management and other operational systems. Each organization reported having substantial organizational needs in most areas, such as finance, legal, and human resources (**see Figure 2**). The needs assessment results indicate that the Center was able to identify organizations that could benefit from the program and the services that it planned to offer.

Capacity Building Recommendation	Percent who received recommendation
Board Basics A-Z: September	100%
Executive Preparation Institute	100%
Wellness and Work/Life Balance Training	100%
Fundraising Classes Development Planning, Board Engagement in fundraising, grant writing	100%
Board Match	100%
D&O Insurance	87.5%
Employment Law/Employee Handbook/Employee Onboarding	100%
Board Governance Resources Board assessment tool, Resource reference guide, board orientation, board member agreement, and recruitment sample	100%
Executive Director Resources Job Description, Evaluation tool, meeting with Sean	100%
Succession Planning Resources	100%
Operating Reserves for Nonprofits	100%
Program Evaluation	100%
Establish a Line of Credit	75%
Strategic Planning	12.5%
Bookkeeping/Audit help	12.5%

Figure 2. CELAP Needs Assessment Results

A.2. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The evaluation was conducted by an external evaluation firm — NNR Evaluation, Research & Planning LLC (NNR). NNR has extensive experience working in Washington, DC, and with similar capacity-building programs geared toward Black-led organizations working in Wards 7 and 8. The evaluation procedures were values-based and comprised of the following procedures:

- **Document Review** – a close examination of all program materials and other internal documents.
- **Staff check-ins** – informal and formal conversations with program staff and wellness coach Erika Totten to discuss program implementation strengths, challenges, and lessons learned.
- **Participant focus groups** – two one-hour focus group sessions with program participants to discuss the value of the program and needs for improvement (5 of the 8 participants participated). These discussions were recorded and professionally transcribed.
- **Participant online survey** – a short survey designed to track participant outcomes (e.g., the adoption of new practices). The survey also provided another opportunity for participants to give their feedback on the program. Three participants completed the surveys. The survey included open-, closed- and rank-order questions.

The evaluation was designed to be right-size, i.e., not too burdensome for participants, but still yielding enough data to allow program staff to understand the program's impact and make refinements should the program be offered again. Evaluation participants received a monetary stipend for their participation. The stipend was provided to offset the cost of participation and to recognize their valuable insights and expertise as Black women.

The evaluation results are largely qualitative. Extensive use of quotes in this report tell the story of how capacity building programs work for Black women-led nonprofit organizations, organizations that have been historically sidelined by the philanthropic sector with little financial investment or other support – while tasked with providing important services for the most vulnerable residents in their communities. The quotes used in this report primarily come from the focus groups and were organized thematically to garner insights into how the capacity building program was able to impact the organization's capacity in meaningful ways and how the program can be improved for future cohorts.



B – RESULTS

B.1. PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

CELAP participants provide a variety of extraordinary and life-changing services to their communities. These services are part of an invisible safety-net that are the hallmark of Black women nurturing life – through caring spaces and institutions. Through their efforts, participating organizations provide peer advocacy support for women and girls in and out of prison, retreats for youth to heal from gun violence, legal support for women experiencing gender-based violence, and they address the food needs of Black families. The programs serve youth, women, farmers, and families in wards 7 & 8. **See Figure 3.**

Leader Name	Title	Organization	Mission Statement	Area of Focus	Budget	Staff Size
Alana C. Brown	Executive Director	Safe Sisters Circle	To provide culturally specific, trauma informed, and holistic services for black women and girl survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault living primarily in Wards 7 and 8.	Domestic Violence/Abuse	\$1.2M	13 (12 FTE, 1 PT)
Beverly Smith	Executive Director	Momma's Safe Haven	To provide safe spaces conducive for individuals to heal from trauma. We encourage self-love, higher education and self-employment by offering a support bridge to those in need of resources to get to the next level in their lives. We believe it takes a healthy village to raise a child.	Maternal Health and Equity	\$146,000	23 (1 FTE, 12 PT 10 volunteers)
Jackie Carter	Founder & Executive Director	Children's Legacy Theater	Children's Legacy Theatre creates extraordinary theater experiences that educate and challenge young people and their communities. Our mission is to inspire teens to explore, think, and connect to other people and ideas. We bring classical and historical plays to life in ways that encourage teens to dream about who they are and who they may become thereby, producing kinder and positive contributors to society.	Arts Education		
Jawanna Hardy	Founder	Guns Down Friday	Creatively provide resources to communities affected by Youth Homicide, Suicide, & Mental Health Illnesses.	Gun Violence		
Josephine Mazyck	Executive Director	Fihankra Akoma Ntoaso (FAN-DC)	FAN is a youth centered community of safe places, linked hearts.	Safety and Youth Development	\$594,950	6
Keyonna Melissa Jones	Founder & Executive Director	Congress Heights	Congress Heights Arts + Culture Center is a 501 (c)(3) organization with a mission to expose, inspire, educate and both youth and adults to the rich arts and cultural opportunities, specifically in Wards 7 + 8, from a historical and modern day prospective.	Arts, Culture, and Humanities		
Lashonia Thompson-El	Executive Director	Women Involved in Reentry Efforts (the WIRE)	To provide peer advocacy and peer support to women in prison, women in reentry & women and girls at-risk of incarceration.	Women and girls who were formally incarcerated, are currently in prison, or at risk of incarceration	No budget	14 (volunteers; stipends and honorariums provided when available)
Tambra Raye Stevenson	Founder & CEO	Women Advancing Nutrition, Dietetics, and Agriculture (WANDA)	WANDA is on a mission to build a movement of women and girls of African descent leading as food sheroes in our communities through education, advocacy, and innovation.	Nutrition and Food Systems		

Figure 3. CELAP Program Participants, Cohort 1 (2023)

B.2. PROGRAM CONTEXT

The Center created a culturally responsive and culturally affirming capacity program. For example, CELAP made significant investments in the wellness of its leaders through group and individual wellness sessions with Erika Totten. It also allowed participants to opt-in to the different capacity building, offering services in ways that fit their professional readiness, organizational needs, schedules, and ever-increasing work demands. Much like an executive who has a team of assistants, program staff sent reminders, affirmations, and carried out other small gestures to make participation easier and streamlined from the leader's perspective. The evaluation's findings are understood through this context and in determining the key components of an effective capacity-building program. The following quotes provide a sense of life in a growing Black woman-led nonprofit organization that provides critical community services:

- *Most of us live in the high-risk communities where we serve. Our families are involved in a lot of the trauma that we are experiencing. And so, then we have our personal lives. And for me, I have a full-time job in addition to the organization.*
- *Some leaders have gone through losses this year which has made full participation in the CELAP program challenging.*
- *Just getting the things in line so you have the systems in place to know when you need to check this, when this is supposed to be renewed. Just all of the administrative stuff that sometimes falls through the cracks because we're so busy actually being with our participants or dealing with the crisis of a staff or community person. It's grassroots work. There's always a fire to put out.*
- *Capacity-wise, we are small teams. Some of us don't have any team at all. And the teams that we do have are people from the community that are serving the community just out of kindness of the heart.*
- *I talk about all the time the process that it takes to get grants and it's really hard. A lot of us are just one-women bands, so it's a lot that's already on our plate. So, to have to add the process to prove ourselves of the work we're doing, get the money, and then have to prove it all over again with reports on the backside, it is just very stressful. So to have this trust with the funding and be able to just get it and do what we need to do with it, I think is very helpful. And also just empowering that we're trusted to do what we say we're doing.*

This context provides a framework for how to understand the results, best articulated by wellness coach Erika Totten, "Ultimately Black women lead communities, creating programs and structures for the whole. Investing in Black women, invests in humanity. If we are able to take care of ourselves, be resourced and well – it's not the amount of work but we'll grow in creative ways to support what our communities need." In an assessment of CELAP, this means that:

- Capacity-building results are expected to vary by participant leader or organization
- Capacity-building results of all sizes and complexities are valid if they are meaningful to the individual leader and organization
- Sustainability matters in terms of relevance, not longevity (the inherent agility of CELAP leaders is key to the concept of sustainability)
- Capacity-building services must provide "helpful help"
- Substantial capacity-building needs are not further evidence of pathology of the leader, their organizations, or their communities, but rather of underinvestment and the greenlining of Black women-led nonprofits

B.3. CAPACITY-BUILDING OUTCOMES

In a short period of time, the CELAP program was able to help strengthen the eight participating organizations. We present the result of 5 of the 8 below, highlighting the growth moments that created meaningful change. In the next session, we link these results to specific program features and a participant-derived list of recommendations. **See Figure 4.**

Name/ Organization	Highlights of Capacity-Building Work
Alana C. Brown, The Safe Sisters Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added new board members• Secured directors and officers(D&O) insurance
Josephine Mazyck, FAN-DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used the CELAP grant to pay rent, support staff salaries, and hired a grant writer for 3 months• Hosted a fundraiser with Pop Social• Connected with high school kids by partnering with workforce development groups and nonprofits to give students internships after school• Conducted a program evaluation• Developed a strategic plan• Improved budgeting and financial management (e.g., improved bookkeeping practices)
Keyonna Jones, CHACC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular programming• Opened a retail store at Sycamore and Oak• Held two events at the Kennedy Center, leveling up their podcast
Lashonia Thompson-El, The W.I.R.E	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked on a report about the W.I.R.E and their work• Applied and was awarded a license to open a cannabis cultivation center in DC
Tambra Stevenson, WANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led a Food Bill of Rights campaign in DC• Convened an Ujama workshop; Ujama is a cooperative of Brown and Black farmers who are into seed saving and cultural preservation through seeds• Food as Medicine Policy Summit - convening for the Black Community, planning to create an agenda based on Food as Medicine

Figure 4. CELAP Capacity-Building Example Outcomes

B.4. PROGRAM STRENGTHS & PERCEIVED VALUE

Participants were asked to share what they found most beneficial and valuable about the CELAP program. They shared:

The emphasis on the nonprofit sector

“I can’t keep up with all the different bank equitable initiatives, but this is the only one I know who’s decided, “Money shouldn’t just go to businesses. We can’t forget the nonprofits, those who are actually filling in the gaps of social protection programs.” So that is an added value feature that makes them stand out.”

Individual and group wellness sessions

“The work with Erika has been so, so impactful for me on a personal level and a professional level. I’ve always admired her work around wellness prior to having an opportunity to work with her through this grant, and I’ve just pretty much watched her from afar. So, when I knew that they was bringing her on, I was super excited, because to me, she’s one of the gurus in this space when it comes around Black women and wellness. So being able to work with her as a group and have those individual sessions with her, I think have been my biggest takeaway. That has just been so, so meaningful to me and I just am so grateful and I hope that they continue to use her. I hope that she is available to help future cohorts, because she’s the truth.”

Fundraising capacity

“The information that we’ve gotten around small donors, individual donors, and cultivating those relationships. That’s the area that I struggle most in, primarily just because I don’t ask enough. Recognizing that I don’t necessarily ask enough has been helpful and I’ve been doing more of cultivating the ask and making donor calls and doing things of that nature.”

Another participant shared: “The one about donor relationships was really good and I actually took some of that away and started sending out thank you letters and stuff like that. I feel ashamed that I hadn’t done those things before and I actually had some of my funders respond really happy, like, “Thank you so much for the letter and I’ll make sure I share it with the founder,” so that was dope.”

\$25,000 grant

“The finances came in at a great time to support some needed items that we were needing to take care of.”

Another participant shared: “It was perfectly aligned for that funding to come in to ensure that we could make sure we pay our bills, pay our vendors, we make sure that... Basically, our vendors are going to be Brown and Black people, especially Black women, and so that means the money is circulating back into the community. And so that’s always a good thing.”

In recognition of the pledges after 2020, one participant shared: “2020 was a big year for people to start pouring money into Black and Brown organizations, but it was a moment, not necessarily a movement. And so, we received a good bit of funding in 2020, 2021, and then hitting fiscal year ‘22, ‘23, it was just like, “This is slowing down a little bit,” but our operations budget had already grown. And so for me, the money was timely, because I wasn’t making my foundation metrics like last year, as I was the year before. It helped sustain our operations for half a month. My operations budget is about 40 grand a month for our organization.”

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS & PERCEIVED VALUE (continued)

Finally, “we were able to get some work done to our van and update our insurance. It just came at a great time. We were able to do a healing retreat for our families and also help some other grieving mothers with funeral expenses. ... We were able to upgrade some of our marketing materials.”

Connection to the Center for Nonprofit Advancement's content

“One of the other main things for me is having a connection with an organization like the Center to be able to have access to the wealth of information on finances. All of the sessions that I've been able to make have been truly lucrative for [our organization].”

Completing and receiving a written organizational assessment

“I'm really hard on myself when it comes to things. I never really think I'm doing a great job, even if people tell me I'm doing a great job. So, taking the time to do the organizational assessment, affirm that, ‘Oh, you're not doing terrible. Stop putting yourself in this space where you think you're awful at this kind of thing,’ and just showed me in paper the things that I was doing well and then identified the gaps.”

Virtual trainings

“All of the trainings have been very helpful and I've been able to attend all of them, thankfully. And it's been a lot, but I feel like I remember one of the trainings being about marketing and branding and how to tell the story about your organization and things like that. That was one of the ones that I really enjoyed.”

Responsiveness of program staff

“I thought that the staff at the Center for Nonprofit Advancement was very responsive. I feel like they met me where I was at, and they didn't expect me to remember things and they sent me reminders and they always sent me the link and the calendar invite. That stuff was a big deal for me, because I don't have an administrative assistant or all of the support that most EDs probably would love to have. And I felt like they made it easy for me to show up, because they always made sure that I knew what was going on and I had everything I needed to be able to participate, even if it's just a virtual link.” The same participant continued, stating that “They did a great job in making sure that we knew what was going on and reminding us and holding our hand. I'm speaking for myself, holding my hand, because I'm quick to double book and forget about something, even if I'm sitting right in front of my computer. And they made it hard for me to not show up or forget anything. They would even send text [messages]. They really went above and beyond to make sure that I was present.”

Another participant concurred, stating: “I agree, even to the extent of scheduling things out months in advance. I like having my calendar set, ‘cause that lets me plan my personal life and other activities outside of the cohort around that. I like that I have things on the cohort in my calendar well into November. And even the pressure to not make it, the fact that everything was recorded is super helpful, ‘cause you could always go back to watch it.

And finally, “I think that's the one thing that also made me feel comfortable is that I knew that the resources were there and I know that they're still there and I know that I could reach out to anybody at any time. But there also wasn't any pressure because I wasn't there. And there wasn't any guilt again, pressure or guilt on me because I wasn't there. Then they were just checking on me the entire time. “I know you're not here, I know you're busy, but just want to make sure you're good. Make sure you know we're here if you need anything.” And so again, on the wellness tip, very intentional and very thoughtful and very helpful.”

B.5. PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were suggested to expand and grow the program (e.g., to include more staff and mini-capacity-building projects for each organization):

FUNDING

1 Provide long-term and larger grants

- “I also agree that if it was sustainable funding over a two or three- year span of time, it would go further. I’m concerned about, ‘Okay, what happens next year?’ And if I knew that this was a three-year process, then I could be focusing on something else, as opposed to just worrying about what happens next year. \$25,000 was enough for me to meet the needs of a few women but it wasn’t enough for me to be able to really build the capacity of my organization, because in order to do that, I probably would’ve had to have taken the whole \$25,000 and just put it into the organization and I wanted to be able to do some work. I had to make a choice. Do you want to take this money and hire a part-time administrative assistant, or do you want to take this money and do some meaningful work in the community over the next six months? If it was more, obviously I could have done more capacity building, but it just wasn’t enough.”
- “The funding was a blessing and I’m grateful for it, but it wasn’t nearly enough for me to be able to really apply everything that I learned. All of the information that I got it’s just information because I didn’t get anything tangible to help me make that a reality. That funding that we received, and I imagine we are all in the same boat, it was all about how are we going to help our people get through the summer. How are we going to engage with the community and create a safe space and healing space for them to get through the summer, because it’s difficult, it’s challenging, it’s tough right now. And then it was gone.”

Related, let program participants decide if they need funding or pro-bono services. Some participants indicated pro-bono services would help. For example:

- “I would take the in-kind services over the money because when they give me the money, it just makes it more difficult because there’s still limited capacity. I don’t have the staff to do it for me. So I have to figure out how to get it done.”
- “Having in-kind services, because the grant writer and accountant, at least even for me, facilities management, all those things add to what we do. Or a program director, anything that can help push or advance the organization I think is helpful to keep in mind too, not just monetary.”

But others found the unrestricted grant incredibly helpful. For example:

- “An organization having issues with cash flow would benefit from directly having cash on hand, but an organization that doesn’t have capacity would benefit from services... The way our funding is set up we usually face a cash flow issue around Q1 and are working to diversify funding sources so cash would be beneficial for us. Additionally, it would be helpful to receive both cash and services.”
- “I think just getting an unrestricted /flexible operational grant helps organization[s] decide on how they can best put to use the funding- and not rush them to make decisions right away but allows them to access [their] budget/program/future. I don’t think services would be great because what if they didn’t need those services and/or didn’t like or want any service providers that might be provided by the grant.”

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS – Continued

2 Provide financial support at the end of the program so that the work continues over the next year

- “What could happen is the funding can be the initial amount, but for those who actually complete the program, there’s this bonus funding that could come into play to set you up for success next year to implement the things that you learned throughout the program. I would say it should be matched. So \$25K upfront, \$25K on the back-end, make it \$50K total. If you’re really trying to make an impact, then you would then track changes over, not just one year, [but a] two-year evaluation period as well.”

PROGRAMMING & CAPACITY BUILDING

3 Expand capacity-building opportunities to other staff, volunteers, and the board

- “It’s more beneficial for me, because I have a lot of women who are passionate and they have a lot of energy, but they also have a huge learning curve. It’s to the extent that they don’t even know what they don’t know. And the more that they can learn in non-traditional settings like these, the better off I am, and the organization is, and the women and girls we serve. Because expecting everybody to go to college or take different classes on their own is not really realistic. If I could bring them into a space like this, it would definitely, definitely be beneficial.”
- “Especially since it’s the Center for Nonprofit Advancement and they have trainings and things that tap into different [topics]. I think it would be beneficial for them to get involved with my team, especially my program director and even my board.”
- “Board development is crucial, helping the board understand what their role is in a nonprofit organization, board structure, helping us figure that out. Those were questions that they asked in the survey that I feel like we didn’t really get into.”

4 Create tangible ways for leaders to engage with the trainings offered by CELAP. One example is having organizational consultants work on a mini-project.

- “I feel like it would’ve been helpful if the workshops were good information wise, but I think it would’ve been helpful if during the workshops we had a tangible something that we could automatically apply when we went back. I think one of the workshops was about engaging new donors or something along those lines. And then we had to talk through our why and our mission. It would’ve been helpful if we left that with a mailing letter that we could have sent to community members about the work that we’re doing and tell them how to donate or some kind of tool that we can immediately put into action, so it’s not just a thing that now we learn and we still have to go figure out how to apply and when to apply it.”
- “Maybe one-on-one consultations can be added in to talk through, ‘We’re going to build a roadmap over the next 12 months based on your organizational assessment to get you from a before to after.’ To me, that would be powerful and equivalent to any money amount, because God knows we got our share of problems when you’re founding organizations, when you’re just passionate and you need real skill set and operations roadmaps in place...we need to triage with a nonprofit coach in between the organizational assessment and the final closeout ceremony.”

5 Provide access to high-yield saving and other JPMorgan Chase bank products

- “Add some coin in a high-yield interest savings account for the organization, which gives them access to all of the banking perks of being a customer with JPMorgan Chase, which of course is beneficial for both the nonprofit and for JPMorgan Chase. That coin can sit there until the end of the cohort and then the [organization will] have access to it at the end, while also giving the nonprofit a line of credit that they could tap into in case of emergency, which could be the beginning of a reserve account, which most small nonprofits don’t have, but funding partners are looking for. And that’s a real capacity-building piece, and I think that was a missed opportunity with this cohort.”

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS – Continued

CONNECTING TO FUNDERS AND EACH OTHER TO BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

6 More connections with other funders

- “We really need help with connecting with other funders who share JPMorgan Chase values and who they know would be willing to support us. Chelsea sent me a grant application for an organization that she used to work with who has some reentry funding. I completed the interest form, and she was like, “If you don’t hear back from them, let me know, because I used to work with them.” And I’m like, Yes, this is what I need. I need somebody that know the people, that care about the work that I’m doing, so that I can get a leg up in this funding world. So we need more of that. It’s one thing to just teach us how to go after funding, but for me, I need literal help, hands-on help.”

7 More in-person time together and community building

- “Entrepreneurship can be lonely, what I felt was not optimized is the power of bringing Black women together who are about changing their community. The benefit of us creating our own social capital when this program is gone, I feel was a missed opportunity that had not really been cultivated. I think in-person would influence that, even if it’s just having happy hours or sister suppers because what it creates is a dynamic of this reliance on institutions, and when they leave, then what do we have? Do we scatter like rats and go to our own ships? I’m into the idea of community over everything. How is community being formed as an asset even when the resources, the institutions are not present?”
- “I would implore us to come together as a community of women and be able to have our own sister-like meetups at a local Black woman-owned restaurant and just share, because I feel like that has been missed. Even though the content and everything is great.”
- “I know there was some talk when we wanted to meet in-person that there was a venue problem or an issue, but I think we could have taken advantage of the Center definitely to get together. And that would’ve added a little bit more comradery and more connection. And then I think we would’ve felt more comfortable to reach out to each other. I’m an in-person kind of person.”
- “I think virtual has become the new normal. And in the corporate world it’s like getting together in person has become such a heavy lift that people just defer to the virtual setting and that’s what happened here. But there could be somebody that is assigned specifically for helping us to come together with those monthly events, helping us to coordinate those. Or, we could in the beginning, decide and commit to each take on one activity a month. But it has to be intentional, and you really have to decide upfront that this is a value that you want to hold, something that you want to do.”

8 Create opportunities to link the first and second cohorts together

- “I’m excited about the new cohort coming in. I think that we could be more mentors. That could be a way to continue funding and resourcing partnership. I think it’s very important for the community, for us to come together in a real sense.”

POST-TRAINING & LOGISTICS

9 Store resources in a centralized location accessible after the program formally concludes

- “I think it would’ve been helpful to maybe have a Facebook group for the program, so we have a centralized location to share resources and anything we might’ve missed. It’s also an opportunity where videos like this could be housed even, versus having everything just in our inboxes or on applications that we may not have access to.”



C – CONCLUSION

In 2023, with funds from JP Morgan Chase, the Center for Nonprofit Advancement initiated a grant and capacity building program called the Chief Executive Leaders Ascend Program or CELAP. CELAP was designed to support, nurture, and strengthen eight Black women-led nonprofit organizations serving the children and families living east of the Anacostia river in southeast Washington, DC. The eight participating organizations represent the backbone of Black life. Their organizations are resilient, responding to the needs of the community in real time with passion and innovation. CELAP reflects a change in philanthropy to invest in these women and their organizations, after centuries of underinvestment by this country's most wealthy individuals and institutions.

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Black and Latino organizations only receive only 4% of all philanthropic dollars nationwide ([Bridgespan](#), 2020), and only 1% of community foundations invest in Black-led organizations ([NCRP](#), 2020), with some increases after the racial uprisings in 2020 ([NCRP](#), 2023).

Through the \$25,000 grant, workshops, and individual wellness sessions for eight executive directors, CELAP has contributed to important growth in many areas in a short period of time, including board development, legal, administrative and finance . Participants also valued deeper attention to wellness. The capacity-building work was much-needed, as evidenced by the needs assessment results and will likely have important effects on each organization's development in the coming year.

NNR recommends that CELAP continue. We also recommend that the grant increase to \$50,000, if not more, to be paid in one sum and unrestricted (as is the current practice). We agree with participants that if pro-bono services can be provided in addition to the stipend, then these pro-bono services may be of value to allow participants to implement their capacity-building plans with additional paid labor. More attention should be paid to creating a cohort-like feel and bringing participants together in person to build social capital. Relationship building between Cohort 1 and future cohorts should also be a priority for program staff .

NNR also recommends that JP Morgan Chase consider expanding the program to provide five-year funding for each organization to cover their entire organizational budget (e.g., one organization's annual budget is \$40,000). Fully funded organizations have the best chance of fulfilling their mission, adopting the best organizational operations and systems, and making the best use of their finances, given the tremendous needs that each leader is trying to meet. Furthermore, NNR recommends that JP Morgan Chase should work with other national corporate funders to collaborate on the project to fully fund capacity building for more organizations through larger stipends and offer pro-bono services and longer enrollment in the project by engaging more staff, board members or volunteers to take on more complex capacity-building projects.

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APPENDIX 1 – Program Participant Bios

Participant/ Organization

Participant Bio

Alana Brown, The Safe Sisters Circle	Safe Sisters Circle is one of the only organizations in DC that focuses on culturally relevant legal and holistic services for Black women experiencing domestic violence and sexual abuse. Executive Director Alana Brown was named one of the 2022 Washingtonians of the year for her advocacy work focused on increasing Black women's leadership and safety. Safe Sisters Circle services include legal support, housing, assisting clients in completing their the Crime Victims Compensation Application, connecting clients to mental health services, and providing funds for food and other life needs.
Beverly Smith, Momma's Safe Haven	Momma's Safe Haven works with over 5,000 families in DC from Wards 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Executive Director Beverly Smith grew up in Southeast DC and created Mommas Safe Haven to give back to her community. Programming includes the Healing Center, which provides a safe space for community members to heal from the trauma of drug abuse and violence, DC's Youth Got Talent: Black History Talent Show where youth have a space to express themselves through art, dance, fashion, rapping, sing, skits, poetry, and comedy, and Black Wall Street DC which brings together influential Black business leaders to support community members in building businesses, becoming self employed, and empowering community members.
Jackie Carter, Children's Legacy Theater	Children's Legacy Theatre harnesses the power of art through performing classical, historic, and self written plays to help youth explore the complexities of the world . Executive Director Jackie Carter founded the Children's Legacy Theatre to work with at-risk youth to support their emotional and intellectual development as well as encourage them to pursue their interests. In 2023, the Children's Legacy Theatre performed Robert Small Legend of the Black Mariner. The play follows Robert Small, who in the midst of the Civil War, commandeers a confederate ship and brings 16 Black men, women and children from slavery to freedom.
Jawanna Hardy, Guns Down Friday	Before founding Guns Down Friday, Jawanna Hardy was in the United States Air Force for six years and was deployed in the mortuary services in Qatar, giving her an understanding of the cost of violence and importance of community support during crisis. When she returned home, Hardy saw her community was experiencing high amounts of violence without proper mental health services and community support. Guns Down Friday is a response to the violence Hardy witnessed and works to build community in DC and Prince George's County. They are focussed on communities afflicted by youth homicide, suicide, and mental illness and go door-to-door, reaching out to families personally and offering tailored support.
Josephine Mazyck, Fihankra Akoma Ntoaso (FAN-DC)	Fihankra Akoma Ntosaso, meaning safe house, linked hearts. FAN-DC has changed the lives of more than 150 teens in foster care since 2005 by providing an after school and summer-time "home base." Josephine Mazyck has a background in community development and social services. Mazyck's past work in education has made her a strong leader, focused on bridging the gap between home and school and helping parents understand they are a part of their child's education.
Keyonna Jones, Congress Heights Arts and Culture Center (CHACC)	The Congress Heights Arts and Culture Center explores the arts and culture within the African Diaspora and African American communities East of the Anacostia River. They strive to develop and expand cultural and artistic opportunities for residents and youth as a way to revitalize wards 7 and 8. Founder and executive director Keyonna Jones received the 37th Annual Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence as a Community Arts Advocate and was one of 7 artists chosen to paint the Black Lives Matter Plaza Mural two blocks from the White House.

APPENDIX 1 – Program Participant Bios (continued)

Participant/ Organization

Participant Bio

**Lashonia Thompson-El,
Women Involved in
Reentry Efforts
(the WIRE)**

Women Involved in Reentry Efforts (the WIRE) provide gender responsive programming for women and girls to successfully reintegrate into society after incarceration. Programming includes mentoring women returning from incarceration, organizing community events, and family reunification activities such as providing opportunities for children to visit their incarcerated mothers. Executive Director Lashonia Thompson-EL grew up in DC and is the author of *Through the WIRE: My Search for Redemption*.

**Tambra Raye Stevenson,
Women Advancing
Nutrition, Dietetics and
Agriculture (WANDA)**

Women And Girls, We Nourish the World (WANDA) works to empower women and girls of African descent to change the current food system. WANDA has created a Food and Nutrition Policy Report which has recommendations on food and nutrition policies for the U.S. federal government. Founder and CEO Tambra Raye Stevenson was named a 2021 Science defender by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the NAACP's Dr. Cobb's Health Advocacy Honoree. Stevenson was also appointed to the DC Food Policy Council and championed the [Food Bill of Rights](#).



Top (left to right):

- Lashonia Thompson-El (the WIRE)
- Jackie Carter (Children's Legacy Theatre)
- Jawanna Hardy (Guns Down Friday)
- Beverly Smith (Momma's Safe Haven)

Bottom (left to right):

- Tambra Stevenson (WANDA)
- Alana Brown (Safe Sisters Circle)
- Keyonna Jones (Congress heights)
- Josephine Mazyck (FAN-DC)