



## Smart from the Start Receives a \$2 Million Gift from Yield Giving Open Call

### *Grant from MacKenzie Scott's Foundation Helps Children and Families in Historically Underserved Communities*

BOSTON (March 19, 2024) – Today, McKenzie Scott's Yield Giving announced Smart from the Start as one of the Yield Giving Open Call's awardees working with people and in places experiencing the greatest need in the United States. Smart from the Start has been awarded \$2 million.

The award will be used to expand and strengthen Smart from the Start's existing programs and resources, which envision a world where every young child feels safe, secure and loved and has their basic needs met for healthy food, warm clothing, secure housing and safe neighborhoods.

"We are thrilled beyond words to have this unbelievable opportunity to partner with Yield Giving. Through their generous gift, Smart from the Start will be able to bring a previously unprecedented level of resources into our communities," said **Cherie Craft**, Founding CEO and Executive Director of Smart from the Start. "A grassroots, family-driven organization, Smart from the Start was founded and is led by members of the same marginalized but powerful populations we work with. We thank Yield Giving, Lever for Change and MacKenzie Scott for this life-changing award."

"Thank you to Yield Giving for providing Smart from the Start this historic opportunity," said **Monika Wirtz**, President of the Board of Directors. "We were able to differentiate ourselves from the vast field of applicants because of our measurable community impact and success stories, made possible through our committed families, and phenomenal staff; our extensive network of partnerships in our communities; our fully invested Board of Directors and Family Leadership team; and our unwavering group of funders, donors and supporters that demonstrate that investing in Smart is not a risk and yields great returns. Smart has a lengthy and powerful track record of remarkable outcomes and has shown that we are sustainable (even through a pandemic) and expanding."

Smart from the Start plans to use the award to:

- **Build programmatic capacity** at all organizational levels in all established cities and neighborhoods within by hiring from the communities we serve
- **Expand therapeutic mentoring, mental health and wellness programs, early childhood and parent programming, and youth development and violence prevention initiatives**, along with Justice 4 All and Justice 4 All, Jr. leadership programming
- **Upgrade and expand place-based programmatic facilities** in all four cities we serve
- Nationally, **share best practices** by engaging, connecting and supporting grassroots social innovators and smaller family and community driven organizations to achieve collective impact
- Make gradual increases in our evaluation budget to **invest in continuous quality improvement**, maintain accountability to our communities, and prove the efficacy of our work while strengthening our evidence-based approach
- Continue to **build our infrastructure** to support the wide-range of services and programs we provide to our community

“This unrestricted operational gift affords us the opportunity to take a few beats and focus anew on our communities, programs, and growth,” said Ms. Craft. “Like the families we serve, being provided a respite from the day-to-day costs and stresses of “running a family” allows us to refocus on where we want to be, our growth and broader goals. Together, we have no boundaries and we look forward to continuing our journey.”

In March 2023, Yield Giving launched an Open Call for community-led, community-focused organizations whose explicit purpose is to enable individuals and families to achieve substantive improvement in their well-being through foundational resources. The Open Call received 6,353 applications and initially planned for 250 awards of \$1 million each. In the Fall of 2023, organizations top-rated by their peers advanced to a second round of review by an external Evaluation Panel recruited for experience relevant to this cause, and underwent a final round of due diligence. In light of the incredible work of these organizations, as judged by their peers and external panelists, the donor team decided to expand the awardee pool and the award amount. “We are excited that our partnership with Yield Giving has resonated with so many organizations,” said Cecilia Conrad, CEO of Lever for Change. “In a world teeming with potential and talent, the Open Call has given us an opportunity to identify, uplift, and empower transformative organizations that often remain unseen.” More information on the Yield Giving Open Call and other initiatives can be found at [www.leverforchange.org](http://www.leverforchange.org).

## **About Smart from the Start**

Smart from the Start (Smart) is a trauma-informed, multi-generational **family support and community engagement organization** with a mission to promote the healthy development of young children and families living in the most underserved communities of Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Our strengths-based, culturally reflective approach reaches out to families and empowers them with the tools, resources, and support they need to thrive.

Learn more about our work at: <https://smartfromthestart.org/>

## **About Yield Giving**

Established by MacKenzie Scott to share a financial fortune created through the effort of countless people, Yield Giving is named after a belief in adding value by giving up control. To date, Yield's network of staff and advisors has yielded over \$16,500,000,000 to 1,900+ non-profit teams to use as they see fit for the benefit of others. To learn more, visit [www.yieldgiving.com](http://www.yieldgiving.com).

## **About Lever for Change**

Lever for Change connects donors with bold solutions to the world's biggest problems—including issues like racial inequity, gender inequality, lack of access to economic opportunity, and climate change. Using an inclusive, equitable model and due diligence process, Lever for Change creates customized challenges and other tailored funding opportunities. Top-ranked teams and challenge finalists become members of the Bold Solutions Network—a growing global network that helps secure additional funding, amplify members' impact, and accelerate social change. Founded in 2019 as a nonprofit affiliate of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Lever for Change has influenced over \$1.7 billion in grants to date and provided support to more than 145 organizations. To learn more, visit [www.leverforchange.org](http://www.leverforchange.org).

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