



eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
Greater Atlanta

## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

### Chief Executive Officer (CEO) YWCA of Greater Atlanta

Atlanta, GA

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“To be the leading community voice for advocacy, support, and empowerment of women as we dismantle structural barriers at the intersection of race, class, and gender.”

– YWCA vision

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# A Compelling Opportunity

**YWCA of Greater Atlanta is more essential than ever to its Atlanta community.** Founded on the campus of Spelman College in 1902, the YWCA is Atlanta's most enduring, impactful nonprofit focused on the success of women and families. The YWCA empowers women to access work, childcare, early learning and training, health and well-being. The organization is a powerful, prophetic voice for social justice, and for dismantling systemic racism and sexism.

**The YWCA Atlanta has a history of mobilizing diverse groups of women leaders to identify community problems, advocate for solutions, and create more equitable communities and opportunities.** YWCA Atlanta provides essential services and has been instrumental in legislative victories on issues affecting women. YWCA Atlanta is a \$3 million chapter of the national organization, [YWCA USA](#).

**This is a time of transition and promise for the YWCA of Greater Atlanta.** A new strategic plan lays out bold goals. A capital campaign to revitalize the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA will soon be announced. Slated to open in 2024, Phyllis Wheatley YWCA will be a community-based center for much-needed services and support for underserved women and children. By expanding to the Westside, the YWCA will significantly amplify and deepen its impact.

**The new CEO has a bold, compelling mandate:** to lead the YWCA into a transformative future that inspires, engages and lifts up women across Atlanta.

**The CEO mandate, and the timing, are important and urgent.** The YWCA events, health and educational offerings are returning to full operation in the wake of pandemic disruption. The campaign for the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA,



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Eliminate racism,  
empower women, and  
promote peace, justice,  
freedom and dignity for all.

-YWCA mission



which will be among the most transformational initiatives in Atlanta, is generating attention and initial support, including strategic collaborative initiatives. Phyllis Wheatley YWCA will be the first initiative focused on helping women thrive and become upwardly mobile on the emerging Westside.

**Current CEO Sharmen Gowens is retiring at yearend**, having financially stabilized and grown the organization during her seven-year tenure. As a result of the organization's commitment to anti-racism, the YWCA Atlanta is one of a handful of chapters to receive a generous \$1 million grant from MacKenzie Scott. The YWCA's signature fundraising events, the much-loved Salute to Women of Achievement and Conversations on Race and Gender events, are back in person this year.

**The new CEO has the opportunity to bring inspiration, expertise, vision and forward motion to an organization that is poised for a bright next chapter.**

## Mandate for the CEO

**The CEO will make the YWCA of Greater Atlanta a central, driving force for lifting up women and children in Atlanta.** The CEO will be a dynamic, compelling leader and partner for the Board, staff, community leaders, donors and strategic partners. The CEO will champion and lead next-level mission accomplishments that enhance the lives of women, and advance anti-racism and empowerment.

The CEO will bring relevant leadership, management, fundraising and lived experience, and passion for this mission. The CEO will:

- 1. Be an inspiring, strategic, transformative leader.** The CEO will be a magnetic, motivating communicator and implementer of bold vision and direction. The CEO will be a great partner

for a strong Board, able to set clear priorities, coalesce teams, and ignite support. The CEO will lead transformative progress and elevate the YWCA's influence, resources and impact in support of women and children.

**2. Grow resources.** The CEO will play a leading role in the Phyllis Wheatley capital campaign, inspiring and engaging Board members and others to raise the multi-million dollars in funding necessary to open the Westside hub in 2024. The CEO will be a creative, engaging fundraiser with individual, corporate and foundation donors. They will build internal development capabilities, enabling the YWCA to more fully realize opportunities to cultivate and steward current and potential donors. The CEO will foster efforts to diversify, steward and deepen philanthropic support, as well as to increase earned revenues through the Early Learning Academy and other initiatives.

**3. Expand the YWCA's relationships, presence and profile.** The CEO will be an extraordinary relationship builder. Through authenticity, ideas and thought leadership, the CEO will earn a "place at the Atlanta strategy table" for the YWCA. The CEO will advance YWCA collaboration, including a model partnership on the Westside with the YMCA, and will advance the eco-system of solutions and services lifting up women and children. By being a strategic, resourceful partner that keeps promises, the YWCA will become a key participant in Atlanta problem-solving and community progress.

**4. Be a great manager of the team and the organization.** The CEO will be an experienced, inclusive, transparent and trusted leader who values, lifts up and develops talent. The CEO will bring business and organizational development acumen and build a strong team and infrastructure, delegating authority and hiring, developing and retaining great talent. They will build a collaborative, empowered



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team at the headquarters location and at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

- 5. Enable the YWCA to make a greater difference, now and in the future.** The CEO will be forward-looking and innovative – a source of both ideas and implementation. The CEO will be an adaptive leader and learner cognizant of digital, societal, political and economic forces and able to transform the organization to meet emerging needs of women and children. The CEO will be a passionate advocate for the mission to eliminate racism and empower women, and promote peace, freedom and dignity, and will seek to ensure the success of the organization’s short and long-term objectives.

### Personal Characteristics and Assets

The ideal YWCA CEO candidate will have a track record of leadership, management and fundraising, and authentic lived values that center justice, equity and inclusion. Experience with advocacy, women’s empowerment, education and human services is desired, and passion for the YWCA mission is essential.

Personal characteristics and assets will include:

- Integrity, self-awareness, confidence *and* humility
- An inclusive, accessible, energetic and energizing persona
- Relationship-building, listening skills and emotional intelligence
- Strengths in vision, strategy, and innovation
- Communication, advocacy and persuasion skills
- Organizational development, management, delegation, and change management skills
- Experience working well across generational, racial, class, faith and other differences



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The ideal YWCA CEO candidate will have a track record of leadership, management and fundraising, and authentic lived values that center justice, equity and inclusion.

- Ability to discuss uncomfortable topics, build consensus, and make tough decisions as necessary
- Ability to clarify, communicate and manage clear expectations
- A record of advancing justice, equity and inclusion
- Ability to foster and balance short- and long-term progress
- Courage and boldness
- A sense of humor

## The Organization

Founded in 1902 on the campus of Spelman College, the YWCA of Greater Atlanta has been a leading voice advocating for change for women and girls and creating more equitable communities for 120 years. The organization is a local chapter of the national organization, [YWCA USA](#). The YWCA USA is a source of best practices, training and conferences, and peer collaboration.

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta empowers women and girls by providing direct services, programs and advocacy. Services and programs focus on three key areas:

- **Advocacy & Social Justice.** The YWCA engages in public policy analysis and advocacy through the Georgia Women’s Policy Institute.
- **Education & Economic Empowerment.** Licensed under [Bright from the Start](#), the Early Learning Academy (ELA) provides working families with quality, affordable childcare and early education for children ages six weeks through five years, with about 120 children currently enrolled. Through Teen Girls in



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Technology (TGI Tech), the YWCA teaches STEAM skills for middle school girls.

- **Health & Safety for Women and Girls.**

Through its community-based ENCOREplus program, the YWCA provides breast cancer early detection and awareness.

**During 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted the YWCA's core business, the Early Learning Academy.** The campaign to re-open the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA was paused. As soon as was appropriate, the YWCA re-opened the Early Learning Academy and offered several programs and educational activities virtually. Among these were virtual meetings of leaders and concerned citizens to discuss issues related to racial equity, health and economic disparities. Through careful management, PPP, and resumption of early learning and virtual events, the YWCA of Greater Atlanta has navigated the challenges related to COVID-19.

**The YWCA of Greater Atlanta's new strategic plan sets out four goals:**

**Goal 1: Advance Bold Conversations and Ideas.**

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta is a space for bold conversations to advance gender equity, social and racial justice.

**Goal 2: Empower Women and Girls.**

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta offers a mix of programs that support women and girls over their lifespan from childhood through adulthood.

**Goal 3: Inspire Donors.**

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta inspires donors and funding partners to support its programs and successes resulting in a lifetime of commitment and sustainability of our mission.

**Goal 4: Invest in Leaders Across the Organization.**

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta will have bold leaders ready to implement our vision



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and transform the organization including board, staff, and volunteers.

**The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to positively impact women's lives.**

The YWCA Atlanta is preparing to undertake a multi-million dollar campaign to revitalize the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA as a hub of services, activity and community for underserved women and families.

The Phyllis Wheatley building is located in the historic Westside neighborhood that is home to Spelman College, Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse School of Medicine and Morris Brown College. It was once the neighborhood of prominent civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Maynard H. Jackson and Ella Mae Wade Brayboy.

Today on the Westside, boarded-up houses and vacant lots are gradually being replaced by infill development thanks to public, private, and philanthropic investment, and the work of Westside Future Fund and others. Despite the signs of progress, over half the households remain below the poverty level and many women struggle to make ends meet, as they have for years. Their futures, and their children's futures, are in question.

**Through the Phyllis Wheatley center, YWCA Atlanta seeks to change that trajectory.** Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA will offer programs, supportive services and community-building – on its own and through many partnerships – that will help women gain access to opportunity in order to thrive and become upwardly mobile. Through collaborations with nonprofit partners and philanthropic support, the YWCA Atlanta will:

- Renovate and revitalize the 22,000-square-foot Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA so that it



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can reclaim its prominence as a safe space for women and their children;

- Implement programming that will help underserved women cope with the challenges of life and improve their futures; and
- Build the capacity to sustain operations over time.

Strong nonprofit partnerships and initial funding are already in hand. Building on the YWCA's established advocacy, education and wellness programs, the Phyllis Wheatley Center will significantly deepen the organization's impact in the Atlanta community.

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta embraces the power of women as a cornerstone in the fight for gender equity and racial justice. The YWCA is committed – now, more than ever – to providing the level of support and empowerment that will meaningfully enhance the lives of more and more women and children.

## The Relationships

The CEO reports to a Board of Directors and manages a staff of 30. Current direct reports include the Chief Operating Officer, Director of the Early Learning Academy, Director of Advocacy, and Manager of ENCOREplus. Planned future hires include senior Program, Development and Communications leaders, as well as Director of the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA.

## The Location

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta headquarters is in the midtown Virginia-Highlands neighborhood. The planned expansion, adding the Phyllis Wheatley Westside YWCA in 2024, will include additional administrative offices as well as program space.

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For potential consideration or to suggest a prospective candidate, please email

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or call **Kathy Bremer** or **Lysondra Somerville**

at 404-262-7392. For the status of this

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[www.BoardWalkConsulting.com](http://www.BoardWalkConsulting.com).

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