

The Athlete's Foot - StAART q&A

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1. What are the program components of StAART?

StAART was created with the initial focus of creating opportunities for ownership within the sneaker industry through franchising. Through StAART, TAF would recruit and develop Black entrepreneurs to become franchisees within a market segment that's growing more and more exclusive every year.

But through the development of StAART, TAF realized a greater opportunity to promote ownership across all facets of the sneaker industry.

StAART now has three areas of impact and focus: Expose, Educate and Activate. These three areas are in direct response to the traditional barriers Black entrepreneurs face in business: lack of access to capital, lack of access to information and lack of access to the relationships with key decision makers and gatekeepers.

Ownership in the sneaker retail industry is vital to our mission, so we're creating a support system to shepherd current and future Black entrepreneurs through the process.

This initiative is now significant not only because of the impact it stands to have on the individuals who will go through the program, but also because of the ripple effect it



stands to create within the industry and the community at large.

Through StAART, we're pulling back the curtain on the industry, showing various pathways to business ownership and highlighting those who have already achieved success. StAART will also provide direct access to tools, resources, and information. Activation, however, will be key. StAART will recruit and develop the next generation of retail owners. The information and resources provided will directly support those who wish to apply become franchisees through the program.

2. **How will TAF ultimately define the success of StAART?**

The mission of StAART is to increase African American representation and ownership within the sneaker industry while also championing Black-owned retail and entrepreneurship within the community at large. Our goals are simple: build generational wealth, build legacy and build community.

To do this, our success cannot and will not end with just the people who go through our program to become franchisees. While that will undoubtedly be a metric of success, we want the vision and principles of StAART to reach and impact as many people as possible. This initiative is significant not only because of the impact it stands to have on the StAART franchisees, but also because of the ripple effect it stands to create within the industry and the community at large. Exposure and education are just as important as the activation of the new franchisees.

Success will be defined by the partnerships we're able to create within the community. Success will be defined by the number of people we are able to expose to the lesser-known opportunities that exist within the industry. Success will be defined by the number of young people we are able to educate about entrepreneurship. Success will be defined by the number of people who now see the opportunity to build generational wealth through franchising. Success will be defined by the number of Black vendors we're able to connect with jobs, opportunities and contracts within the industry.

We hope that, because of StAART, the sneaker industry will be more equitable and representative of the people, culture and community that made it the multi-billion dollar industry that it is today. We also hope that StAART will be a driver of a new stream of wealth and legacy of ownership.

3. **Why franchising?**

Franchising can provide entrepreneurs access to a proven system and business model, which can significantly decrease traditional start-up risks. This often results in quicker store openings, more availability to capital, greater access to resources and training and faster generation of revenue. There's also the benefit of built in marketing, branding and customer loyalty. With The Athlete's Foot in particular, ongoing training and support are provided to help fast track the franchisee's knowledge base and expertise in the industry. There is also significant growth potential with franchising, especially through TAF's model, which puts considerable control in the hands of the franchisee. Most of TAF's franchisees are multi-store retailers, including Isom Lowman, who has owned 39 stores in his 20+ years with the company.

4. **How long does it take to launch a franchise?**

From discovery day to store opening, it typically takes roughly about 8-12 months, including 6-8 weeks for the store build out. During this onboarding period, franchisees are immersed in all aspects of the business and receive peer mentoring and coaching from veteran franchisees.

This process also includes meeting with vendors to make product selections and coordinating with contractors on the store buildout.

5. **Do you think the StAART program will have an impact on other small independent store owners?**

Our intention is for StAART to have a positive impact on the entire industry, not just those who will go through the program. We believe that a rising tide can lift all boats. If through StAART we can bring greater attention to the gaps, barriers and inequities within the sneaker industry, we believe all stand to benefit. We want to use our platform to bring about change across the industry, not just within our company and we believe there's enough opportunity to be shared.

We're also making a concerted effort to extend ourselves to current independent Black-owned retailers as a resource and an ally, which has always been of importance to us and a part of our TAF culture. The Athlete's Foot currently has deep relationships within the industry that extends from the major athletic retail brands to the small independent store owners.

6. **What is the role of the StAART Advisory Council?** The StAART Advisory Council was developed to ensure our efforts were not existing in a silo or a vacuum. TAF believes the StAART program has the potential to make incredible impact and we believe that impact can only achieve its highest potential through collaboration. StAART Council members will provide valuable insight, perspective and support as the program evolves. They will also be asked to serve as mentors and resources to the StAART program participants.
7. **Who is the ideal StAART candidate?** TAF is looking to support Black men and women entrepreneurs with a passion for the sneaker industry. Potential new owners must be willing to make TAF their primary focus as dedication, presence and focus are essential to developing a successful retail business. additional criteria include: proven business acumen, alignment with TAF's core values, proven leadership experience, and critically important, a commitment to community.
8. **Are there requirements for eligibility?** Yes, StAART program candidates are asked to meet certain criteria to become eligible for franchisee approval. The criteria is broken into five categories:
 - Experience and Skills
 - Culture
 - Leadership
 - Community
 - Financials
9. **Where will these new stores be?** The strength of our existing store base is in the Southeast, so expansion within our current footprint would be a logical starting point. What is equally important is we open stores in cities where our new StAART program franchisees already have connections to the community. Places where they already know the people of the community, the schools, local leaders, etc.
10. **What is TAF's ask of the "community?"** We're asking the community to engage with us. Explore the program. Share it within their networks. Connect us with the people and organizations who can either help us make a greater impact or with the individuals who believe that this program will help them propel their futures forward. We can't do it alone.
11. **How are TAF's strategic brand partners being invited to support?** We are inviting each of our partners to engage with StAART in the way that feels most authentic and



aligned to them. We have already received tremendous support from our partners and others within the TAF extended family and look forward to seeing how they each uniquely engage with us on this mission to bring equity and representation to the sneaker industry.

12. Why is TAF qualified to roll-out the StAART program?

As the country's first athletic retail franchise, The Athlete's Foot has a long-standing reputation for its commitment to diversity, inclusion and community and remains the only retailer with a 100% franchise model – all stores are locally owned and operated. TAF has successfully supported hundreds of entrepreneurs in franchising in its 50-year history and has a reputation for providing its franchisees with the tools and resources needed to be successful. As such, TAF's franchise model puts it closer to the community and closer to the consumer. TAF maintains strong relationships with its strategic brand partners and strong relationships within the industry.