

Part A - General Information

Organisation/Individual Name

Ms Independent

Organisation Type/Structure

Community Interest Company (CIC)

Theme/Nature of Project

Employment

Company/CIC Registration Number (if applicable)

12995128

Project Name (if same as Organisation Name, please leave this blank)

Leading Ladies

Name of Lead Contact

Zoe Garshong

Email

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Website

<https://www.msindependent.co.uk/>

Social Media Handles (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc):

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ms-independent/>
<https://www.instagram.com/msindependentcareers/?hl=en>

Part B - Project Proposal

Project Mission: A snapshot of the project's intention (50 words max)

We will reduce inequality, creating systemic change by reaching girls who are most likely to face challenges and prejudice in their career journeys. Through distinctly women-led, in-school workshops, we empower them with the soft and hard skills needed to thrive, whilst building employment networks in their communities to strengthen access to opportunity.

Situation (250 words)

Access to and success in career journeys remains one of the biggest products and exacerbators of inequality. In 2020, only 5% of FTSE 100 CEOs were women and fewer than one in five small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK were led by women. Women are paid 15% less per hour than men, who are 23% more likely to negotiate pay rises.

For women with intersectional challenges such as being black asian ethnic minority (BAME) and growing up in poverty, this is intensified. As a woman of colour, I experienced this first hand. Statistically, unemployment is twice as likely and inequality in high-paid roles is significantly higher, with BAME women holding only 4.6% of the UK's top roles.

Despite alarming statistics and undeniable inequality, the gender pay gap rose from 2020-2021 to 15.4%. Since the pandemic, this is only set to worsen, with 29% of our young women now feeling less confident about obtaining a job.

Currently, there is a huge gap in the curriculum and in services to support young women with the skills, networks and abilities to actually change this, and, a lack of evidence to how we can truly change this at its root cause.

Complication (250 words)

Despite huge strides in gender equality, women, especially those who grow up facing challenges, are not accessing the futures they deserve. Whilst the gender pay gap continues to be acknowledged and businesses increasingly commit to diverse recruitment, the gender pay gap remains stagnant at best and socio-economic and racial factors remain in direct correlation to employment inequality, suggesting undeniably that addressing this issue at its root remains complex and lacking.

Yet, speaking at events across the UK and teaching women the skills and knowledge to thrive in interviews

and negotiate higher pay rises, thousands expressed the difference it would have made to their lives if they had learnt these skills when they were younger.

It became clear that one of the main underlying problems is that girls are not taught the hard and soft skills they need at a young enough age to really make a difference to their careers and lives.

“Being in this programme has really helped me learn a lot about business finances and things I hadn’t thought about before.” – Workshop Participant 2021

No young women should be disempowered before they even leave education, nor lack the skills to achieve their career ambitions. Yet this is not part of the curriculum, nor are there services designed to reach and support girls while they are still in education and build the aspirations, confidence, career skills and connections. Partnering with schools, to reach girls still in education, presents an opportunity to change this at the community level, whilst building the evidence needed to leader wider systemic change by providing intervention examples which break the cycle rather than support surface level change.

Solution (250 words)

We will change this, by delivering in-school workshop programmes that reach young women aged 14-19 who are BAME and/or have grown up in poverty and empower them, critically before they leave education, with:

1. Increased Resilience and Confidence
2. Increased Career Skills and Knowledge
3. Increased Career Connections

We have refined the delivery and content of two workshop programmes with over 3,800 young women so far, with 97% feeling more confident about entering employment.

1. Leading Ladies (tailored to school or college) – Over six weeks, five 90-minute sessions will develop young women’s soft skills, leadership skills, networking skills, presentation skills, CV building, how to set targets and goals, employability knowledge and confidence. They then put these to practice in a full day ‘Finale’, delivering a presentation to inspire other young women.
2. School Girl Boss (tailored to school or college) - over six weeks, five 90-minute sessions develop young women’s entrepreneurial, profit planning, account managing, budgeting, problem-solving and presentation skills. Young women then apply these skills, presenting their business ideas to corporate partners at our full-day community events.

“This programme is really helpful and taught how to run a business, how to start one...” - 2021 Workshop Participant

This project will be delivered specifically in South London, where Ms Independent has already built a strong network of local employers to support young women on the programme. Demonstrating our immediate and eventually long-term impact with schools and businesses each year, we will continue to scale and build a financially sustainable model, with potential to evidence the importance and impact of our work and lead systemic change with the voices of young girls at the forefront.

Part C - Wider Support

How would the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners' support be beneficial to your project? (250 words max)

One of the most exciting aspects of this grant would be access to and support from Stephen Llyod’s network of partners, to help Ms Independent grow in reach and impact.

To that end, Sonnet Advisory & Impact CIC advice on partnering and structuring would be key to unlocking our growth whilst ensuring we remain set up for future success.

Tapping into key skills including knowledge of the law, finances, governance and investment management would provide Ms Independent with the support it needs and currently struggles to obtain with only one full time staff member. This has led to challenges in the past including not setting Ms Independent up as the correct legal structure, which have caused major set backs. These challenges could be overcome and avoided with the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners, ensuring that Ms Independent can reach its potential as a CIC.

Part D - Financial Justification

In general terms, please explain how the winning funds would be used to carry out your project. (50 words max)

MS Independent aims to change the landscape of employment equality. At the moment I am the only paid employee - working hard to build partnerships with schools and businesses, leading workshops, speeches and governing the CIC. This money would be used towards my salary, with the aim of growing the partnership network to eventually employ a workshop facilitator so I can continue creating systemic change.

Part E - Supporting Information

Governing Documents: Where relevant, please upload any recent charity accounts and governing documents as attachments.

- [Ms-Independent-Global-C.I.C.-Managment-Accounts-2022.pdf](#)

Team: We would like to learn a little more about the individual or team invested into the project. What are your individual credentials? Is there a story behind how you or your team all came together to support the project? (75 words max)

As an Economics student I wrote my final dissertation on the gender pay gap. I then gained six years' experience in higher education and recruitment, experiencing first hand and witnessing the issues I had studied. I began Ms Independent as an online blog to support women in their careers. Within one year, this had grown to 1,000 women and I was invited to talk at countless events on the subject.

YouTube Video

(will email today)