

Part A - General Information

Organisation/Individual Name

Connector Media CIC (t/a Sewing Rooms)

Organisation Type/Structure

Community Interest Company (CIC)

If 'Other' please specify

Other

Theme/Nature of Project

Environment

If 'Other' please specify

Other - Environmental

Company/CIC Registration Number (if applicable)

06362350

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

SewFab Thermal Cooking Bags

Name of Lead Contact

Paula Gamester

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Part B - Project Proposal

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

Two-thirds of all UK households will be trapped in fuel poverty by January 2023. 18 million families, the equivalent of 45 million people will be left making ends meet after further predicted rises in the energy price cap in October 2022 and January 2023. An estimated 84% of pensioner couples are expected to fall into fuel poverty with 90.4% of lone parents with two or more children facing destitution.

Situation (250 words)

As an innovative, creative and forward-thinking organisation, we are very concerned about the tsunami that is heading our way in relation to rising cost of fuel energy and relative poverty. We began researching what we could do to help the disadvantaged through these challenging times and came across a thermal cooking aid based on medieval methods. By developing this product, we can tackle a social problem, help families on low income, create an environmental positive product and create revenue for our social enterprise. The fact is, our ovens are among the most energy-demanding appliances in our home, aside from our 'fridge and our oven is likely responsible for the highest energy consumption out of all our kitchen appliances. We set about designing a thermal cooking bag whereby food is brought to the boil before being removed from its heat resource and insulated to continue cooking. It is a process which has been developed over the years and now, here in Skelmersdale, we have produced our own modern, portable version. To make the Sew Fab Thermal Cooking bag, we use unwanted rolls/roll ends of textile which are gifted to us by Lancashire based companies. We repurpose this fabric for the thermal bag as well using the off-cuts/scrap pieces of foam, textiles/polyester which we shred to create a hybrid filling for the thermal insulation. Each bag manufactured saves approximately 6kg of materials from going to landfill. Each bag comes with 2 x cushions for the base and top, 4 x thermal side cushion. All washable. It works by cooking normally in a metal casserole or, pan, bringing to the boil for 10 minutes, ensuring the pan has a tight fitting lid. Wrap the pan in a towel - this helps with retaining heat, as well as fixing the lid securely in the Sew Fab bag. Place the

wrapped up pan in the Sew Fab bag cover with the Sew Fab bag cushions and fasten tightly. Leave for 3.5 hrs and food will be fully cooked and ready to serve, using only 10 minutes of fuel.

Complication (250 words)

Connector Media CIC t/a Sewing Rooms, moved into larger premises in November 2019 with a staff of 15 and a full order book of orders, along with daily training sewing and upholstery sessions for our local community. Everything was coming up roses. However, March 2020, Covid 19 struck and overnight, business stopped. However, not to be deterred, we set about designing face-masks made out of germ-resistant fabric. Overall, we manufactured over 70,000 face-masks - for every mask sold, we donated one to front-line workers; care staff; hospitals; essential workers; food banks etc. We were able to deploy over 60 volunteers working in their homes sewing face-masks; scrubs; laundry bags etc. We were able to bring back members of staff who had to be furloughed. Once the use of face-masks was abolished we, unfortunately, found ourselves in a dwindling cash-flow situation, due to the limited number of manufacturing orders being placed. In the meantime, we have had to reduce staff working hours to 15 hours per week over 2.5 days. This is causing severe complications in relation to the number of Thermal Bags we are able to produce on a weekly basis. Each bag takes approximately 2 hours to make and we are having to hand-cut all the fabric required for the thermal inserts. We have an online shop and are selling on e E-bay. Interest in the bags is gathering momentum but we need additional marketing support in getting these bags on the radar, nationally. We have to increase our market in order to pay staff wages. We estimate that 1 family using this cooking method twice a week can save on average £6 - £10 per week on fuel costs, that's a saving of £312 - £520 per annum. That's also a saving of 2 ton of carbon a year ! Due to the rising energy costs, households need immediate, dignified and sustainable solutions to help reduce fuel costs and access nutritious food

Solution (250 words)

We have teamed up with another social enterprise "The Larder" based in Preston, Lancashire to supply energy-saving SewFab thermal cooking bags to a project called "Kids in the Kitchen Families" with the aim of training Food Champions, to demonstrate how to use this energy saving bag to cook hot nutritious meals, including recipes and providing vouchers for fresh, seasonal and easily accessible value-for-money ingredients. The Larder's Food Champions will be delivering workshops across Lancashire demonstrating how to use the thermal cooking bags, including support and learning around freshly prepared food from ingredients sourced locally, understanding seasonality and nutrition. For every bag sold, the Larder will be able to provide training on the use of the bags and will donate a free bag to families participating on the initiative. The Larder will be responsible for the identification and audit of the distribution of the free bags. The Sewing Rooms will be responsible for the manufacturing of the bags; dealing with external sales; audit trail of diversion of textiles from landfill. In the meantime, we have set-up a steering group with West Lancs CVS as the Charity arm. We are now looking at a broader picture and see the Sew Fab Thermal Cooking bag as playing a major part in the development of an exciting educational/environmental project which will tick all the boxes by providing a social need that is practical, scalable and sustainable. We are not experts but have the will and desire to see this project rolled out on a National basis.

Part C - Wider Support

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

This is a very innovative idea and we are at the early stages of turning it into something which would provide help to so many individuals and families facing the catastrophic cost of living crisis facing us all. We are only a very small enterprise but have the passion and desire to bring about social change. We require the support of professionals who will help us drive this initiative forward and open doors for us. We have made contact with the energy companies and are awaiting interest from Octopus at the moment. We have the will and determination to succeed and will do everything within our power to see this project come to fruition. However, we have limited staffing resources and by gaining assistance from a network of professionals know only too well we will succeed. For example, the Sew Fab Thermal Bag will also act as a cooler, so would save on use of refrigerators. Although, the bag has been designed due to the energy crisis we are all facing, the concept of the bag could be used for Outdoor pursuits and events but would require waterproof coverings; attachments for cycles; carriers with wheels for festivals etc. This is where we also value professional support with the refinements necessary.

Part D - Financial Justification

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

Winning funds would enable us to employ additional staff to be able to manufacture and increase the stock holding of Sew Fab bags.

Part E - Supporting Information

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

- [Articles-of-Assoc-CM.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)

Paula Gamester CEO and myself (Maureen Fazal) co-Director both worked throughout Covid galvanising the volunteers in making face-masks and distributing to front-line workers. March 2022 - fast-forward and both of us became very poorly with the virus. I received an email from a friend about medieval methods of cooking and it was from that email, the SewFab Thermal Bag was developed.

YouTube Video

Will send via email

Additional References: You are welcome to provide a list of up to 5 links with any relevant supporting material or visuals, as further reference

Will send via email