

Part A - General Information

Organisation

Gen

Organisation Type/Structure

Social Enterprise

Theme/Nature of Project

Community Development

Name of Lead Contact

Trelawny Mckenzie

Email

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How did you find out about the Awards?

Social enterprise funding search

Part B - Project Proposal

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

In a digital age, people are desperate for human connection. Using science and technology, Gen makes meeting new people, uncomplicated, creative and fun. We aim to re-popularise third spaces and pour back into existing community organisations and initiatives.

Our brand promise is that 'the good old days are now'.

Situation (250 words)

Last year, 49.63% of adults in the UK reported feeling lonely, and in 2023 one of the most searched 'how to' terms on Google was 'How to make friends as an adult?'

With the closure of third spaces, budget cuts for community initiatives, and the impact of living in a digital world, BBH Global believes to that Gen Z and millennials are the loneliest generations. Furthermore, these demographics frequently undergo milestones that alter an individual's social network such as leaving education, seeking employment in a new location, moving out of the parental home, and settling down with a spousal partner.

The cost of living crisis has further exacerbated the issue of loneliness, limiting opportunities for social connection and contributing to poorer mental health. Research estimates that 60% of people suffering from loneliness experience mental distress. Loneliness also leads to an increased risk of depression, with 62% of young people confirming it lowers their confidence and self-worth.

Concerning physical health, research shows that loneliness is associated with elevated blood pressure, and acute stress responses, and is linked to 'poorer sleep quality'. A recent study estimates the cost of loneliness to be £9,900 per person per year to employers due to its impact on health and work productivity. Shockingly, loneliness is known to increase the risk of early mortality by 26%. It has become an overlooked social epidemic and with no immediate solution in sight, this is why I founded Gen.

Complication (250 words)

People are waking up to the importance of nurturing platonic relationships, but with limited options, 38% of people admit to using dating apps to try and make friends. However, dating apps are centred around photos and a witty one-liner. When searching for friends, users can't overlook commonality for physical attraction - people want to know whether or not they will get on. Furthermore, on the rare occasion they do connect, people rarely meet in person, deterred by the hassle of arranging plans. Gen wants to address both of these issues through psychometric testing and curated events, better explained in the solution section below.

One of Gen's key goals is to put third spaces back on the map. In the 20th century, sociologist Ray Oldenburg developed the concept of "third places" to describe the vital roles of spaces like cafes, clubs, bars, libraries, churches, parks, plazas, barber shops. They are places that foster a sense of community and social connectedness — describing it as the anchor of community - places for people to relax, socialize, and connect with others. A lack of "third places" has caused dissatisfaction among many people and contributed to the increase in loneliness and the decline of mental and physical well-being. Society needs places to congregate, places to form relationships with others, and to foster a feeling of belonging and community.

Solution (250 words)

Technology is certainly here to stay, therefore it is time we make the problem the solution. Gen is an app designed to help people make new friends through personality typing and real-life meetups. Gen assesses your personality traits and preferences and connects you with individuals who share similar outlooks and interests.

But we don't stop there – we curate a diverse range of events and activities, local to you, designed with your personality type in mind. Whether you're an introvert looking for cosy coffee chats or an extrovert seeking vibrant social situations, Gen has the perfect event. Gen wants to re-establish 'third spaces', revive the concept of 'community' and help people build friendships that go beyond their screen.

We wouldn't be able to bring back a community feel without actually pouring into the community, therefore our goal is to go further than hosting solely Gen events and to partner with local social clubs, workshops and venues and to promote spaces that are already in existence before they close.

Lastly, Gen celebrates 'difference' and recognises the importance of familiarity. Using our advanced filters and preferences, we provide a way for people to connect with people that relate to their lived experiences. In today's society where everyone is championing homogeneity and cultural integration, we are not afraid to celebrate the beauty of difference. We want people to be able to connect with those with whom they share a kinship. Whether you're a queer person looking to make other queer friends, or a south asian man looking to connect the south asians community, at Gen we recognise the value of shared experience and how it can make us feel less alone and more understood.

Part C - Wider Support

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

Looking through the list of partners at Stephen Lloyd is simply exciting. Financial support is always appreciated but it is often the advice, feedback and collaboration that is priceless and far more impactful. As Gen is largely a digital product, it would be incredible to work with GAS Studios to help improve our branding and visual identity. GAS Studios' expertise in communicating brand identity through web design can help us ensure that Gen's values of inclusivity and community are translated across all of our digital platforms.

ELE Global and Helen Squared's marketing and business development knowledge would be significant in ensuring the Gen is well-positioned to engage with our target audience. Furthermore, that our marketing channels are utilised to create buzz and brand recognition to ensure we are meeting our impact goals.

Lastly, Sonnet Advisory & Impact CIC's impact-focused design thinking and frameworks would be incredible to integrate into Gen's business structure early on. As a social enterprise, it is paramount that we continuously measure our impact so that we can continue to develop the business in a way that helps us to meet our social objectives and enact true social change.

As Gen is still in its developmental stage the benefit of such a network is truly unparalleled. We are in early enough stages where the feedback given could greatly impact Gen's success as a social project

Part D - Financial Justification

How do you propose to spend the winning funds of £25,000 (50 words max). Please provide a general idea.

Use of funds:

£15,000 - would go towards product development (the backend infrastructure of the Gen app)

£10,000 - would go towards the event organisation and marketing (inc. our next five Gen events and our digital and guerilla marketing campaigns)

Part E - Supporting Information

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 a young girl, I moved home often. Living in Italy, the U.S. and then returning to the U.K, by age 16 I had moved 14 times and as a result often felt lonely and isolated. I thought when I returned to England, as a young black girl, it would be easier to find people to connect with, but going to a school on the outskirts of London meant I was only one of two people of colour in my school year which left me feeling largely misunderstood and alone.

To feel as though you are a part of something, likeness, kinship, shared experience and simply being a part of a community can ease the pressures of everyday life. We are not solitary beings and having a network of people around you, human connection and shared experience is essential to nurturing both our mental and physical health.