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HONOREE:

Girls Health Ed

Honoree Proposal Description:

Girls Health Ed is a volunteer-based organization that works to address the two interconnected issues of girls health and education by delivering health education programming to low-income girls and young women between the ages of 8 and 17. In particular, Girls Health Ed targets girls who would not otherwise have access to health education and physical education, either at school or at home. The organization has conducted workshops in the U.S. and in Kenya.

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Organization Website:

<https://girlshealthed.org/>

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Girls Health Ed

Global Innovation Fund Grant Application

Innovation and Impact

A country's economic standing is directly correlated with the health and education of its girls. Girls Health Ed is an all-volunteer organization that works to address the two interconnected issues of girls' health and education by delivering health education programming to low-income girls and young women between the ages of 8 and 17. In particular, Girls Health Ed targets girls who would not otherwise have access to health education and physical education, either at school or at home.

Unlike other health-related organizations that serve girls and young women, Girls Health Ed's programming does not focus on just one aspect of healthy living. Instead, we recognize that true health comes from an equal emphasis on many aspects. Our curriculum therefore covers nutrition, physical activity, body image and self-esteem, personal care and hygiene, and reproductive health. Rather than teaching these topics in a vacuum, we tailor our programs such that they are relevant to the girls' daily lives and the challenges that they face. For example, girls often report missing school for reasons including bullying, body image issues, and stigma surrounding their periods as well as access to sanitary products. Girls Health Ed's volunteer Teaching Fellows empower girls to directly address these challenges. We use simple and cost-effective approaches, such as providing girls with reusable sanitary products and underwear so that they don't have to miss school due to issues with their periods. We provide each girl with 5 reusable sanitary napkins that can be used for up to one year, which not only saves money, but also uses less water.

In addition to providing them with these products, the Teaching Fellows also educate them about menstruation and how to deal with the multitude of issues surrounding menstruation. In this sense, Girls Health Ed's approach is innovative in that it combines the tangible with the intangible. Furthermore, by deploying volunteer Teaching Fellows to deliver these programs, the girls we reach are in a position to impart their knowledge to their peers and family members, thereby multiplying our community impact. Having the power to share their newly-acquired skills and knowledge with their communities enhances girls' self-esteem. Additionally, in ensuring that girls do not miss school due to health reasons, improvements in health outcomes lead to improvements in academic outcomes, which in turn lead to improved self-esteem. Girls who are able to reach their full potential and contribute to society will also positively impact economic outcomes. Better health, better academic outcomes, greater self-esteem, and improved economic outcomes are therefore the expected impacts of Girls Health Ed's programming. We will evaluate these expected impacts by administering pre-test and post-test questionnaires assessing various health behaviors and attitudes and self-esteem. Since schools and community centers will opt-in to participate in this program, we will be utilizing a

prospective cohort design and a Solomon Four-Group Design. We will also conduct focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and where possible, collect data from school on attendance and academic outcomes.

Girls Health Ed is currently in the “scaling stage” of its innovation. To date, the organization has reached nearly 1000 girls – 470 in the United States and 530 in Kenya. In the United States, Girls Health Ed currently reaches in hundreds of girls across six cities. Our goal in the next 3-5 years is to expand to more cities and more schools. We aim to do so by strengthening our referral system. We are also working to enhance our international presence. Four schools in a remote village in rural Kenya have requested our programming, which will allow us to reach at least an additional 2000 girls.

Funding from GIF will enable us to compensate our volunteer Teaching Fellows for transportation. In fact, scalability of our programming is tied to being able to compensate our Teaching Fellows. In the case of our Kenya programming, for example, Teaching Fellows have to travel 3 hours from Nairobi to the village in which our workshops taking place. If they are not compensated for their travel, they cannot teach the workshops. Funding will also be used to provide the girls with reusable sanitary napkins and underwear and to serve healthy snacks during our workshops. Serving healthy food is important to the success of our workshops because many of the girls do not eat at home or do not have access to healthy food. Our workshops will be a space where girls have access to nutritious snacks that they would not otherwise have. Serving them snacks will also improve their attention and focus, allowing them to get the most out of the workshops. A portion of our funding will also be allocated to data collection and evaluation efforts. Finally, we hope to hire somebody full-time to help us build and strengthen our community partnerships.

Potential to Scale

As discussed earlier, Girls Health Ed has received numerous requests from schools and community centers, both in the United States and in Kenya. We plan to bring our innovation to an even larger scale by creating a more formalized referral process and developing an automated application process for Teaching Fellows.

Girls Health Ed currently operates in 5 US cities: New York City; Washington, DC; Baltimore, MD; Denver, CO; and Los Angeles, CA. We also operate in a village in Kenya. Over the next year, our goal is to expand to between 5 and 10 more schools within each of the cities we work in. We aim to do so by ramping up our recruiting process for Teaching Fellows, onboarding them, and making sure we are consistently following up with them.

Once we've expanded within each of our 6 cities and have demonstrated the diverse results we need, we will then expand across other US cities. Each of the cities in which we are currently operating is structurally and demographically distinct, and these cities will serve as models for similar US cities. For example, if we receive positive feedback from our partners in New York City, then we will expand horizontally to other US cities that are structurally and demographically similar to New York City.

To date, Girls Health Ed has served 1000 girls: 500 in the US and 500 in Kenya. In each of our 6 locations, we serve between 200-650 girls. Through our within-city expansion over the next year, we will serve an additional 1000 to 2000. Through our horizontal expansion, we will be operating in between 10 to 12 locations. Over 3-5 years, therefore, we will reach between 5000-10,000 girls.

One of the major challenges associated with scaling is making sure that we are able to sustain our programming within each school or community center. Hiring somebody full-time to build and maintain community partnerships is essential to our scaling efforts. Our goal is for schools and organizations to think of Girls Health Ed when recommending health education programming for girls and young women. Making sure we're able to aggressively recruit teaching fellows so we have enough teaching fellows in each area so that we can meet school's needs in spring and fall.

There are no known risks associated with Girls Health Ed's long-term plans, other than those already associated with everyday life. Our approach is low-risk and can only serve to impact participants positively.

Team

Girls Health Ed was founded and is led by Sarah Hillware. As part of her public health studies, Sarah conducted a study on health education in urban and rural cities in the US, Kenya, and India. She collaborated with established health advocacy organizations and handed out information to students (K-12) and parents and provided scientifically-based talks to students and teachers, where she received positive feedback and requests to return. Her research revealed common issues that adolescent girls across all of these environments face, including nutrition, physical activity, personal care and hygiene, and reproductive health. Sarah wanted to develop a sustainable platform to teach all of these topics in one setting. Thus was born Girls Health Ed.

Girls Health Ed currently has 7 board members, 7 volunteer staff members, 8 advisors, and 30 volunteer Teaching Fellows, all of whom bring in a wealth of experience and talent. Among our board members are entrepreneurs with decades of business and startup experience, foreign policy advocates and scholars, health educators, a banking and investment professional, and a physician.

Our staff is made up of our Expansion Coordinator, our Associate Director of Marketing, our Associate Director of Partnerships, our Associate Director of Outreach, our Associate Director of Programs, our Associate Director of Finance, and our Associate Director of Development & Fundraising. Each of our staff members has extensive experience in public health, youth development, and leadership. Furthermore, our advisors and Teaching Fellows come from a variety of backgrounds, yet all share a common mission of empowering girls and young women and helping them discover their voices and inner strength through holistic health education. All Teaching Fellows are trained and supervised by the Associate Director of Programs.

Girls Health Ed has partnerships with several schools and community organizations. For example, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Boys and Girls Club, Youth Build USA, the Girl Scouts, and the Latin American Youth Center have requested our programming and have hosted Girls Health Ed workshops. The Mama Sarah Obama Foundation has been influential in helping us establish our program in Kenya. We are also in the process of establishing a formalized partnership with AmeriCorps. Members could serve as Teaching Fellows, and this would provide us with a consistent volunteer base.