



Closing the COVID-19 Opportunity Gap for Young People through Social Entrepreneurship

Concept Paper Prepared by WE Charity, April 09th 2020

Executive Summary

This document proposes to the Government of Canada (GoC) an opportunity to create a strong multi-faceted social entrepreneurship program to support young Canadians during and post COVID19 pandemic. By incentivizing and equipping youth to engage with social entrepreneurship opportunities, we'll be empowering them both to efficiently contribute to the economy by creating small businesses and boost our nation's economic output, while also addressing important social causes.

The program seeks to serve 8,000 young Canada (under-30) over 12-months with the following three bilingual elements: i) A 10-week digital program providing entrepreneurship expertise and support in the era of COVID-19; ii) a mentorship program linking entrepreneurs with 500+ experts from established companies who will provide functional and industry-specific support in areas such as finance, marketing, productization, distribution, employing at-risk populations, social impact measurement etc.; iii) a base payment to all participants, and access to additional incentive funds and long-term mentorship opportunities.

This program seeks to solve three timely challenges:

- i. how to engage at-scale young Canadians (under-30), including those who were not previously employed;
- ii. how to jump-start entrepreneurship to create jobs for economic recovery, relevant to both 12-24 months of COVID-19 realities and in the years to follow;
- iii. how to engage companies across Canada who have excess employee capacity. Specifically, asking companies that benefit from the 75% federal employee subsidy to consider redirect a small percentage of employee's time (one day per week) to serve as skill-specific mentors for young entrepreneurs. This also encourages established companies to keep employees on the payroll and ensures that the 75% Canadian employer subsidy provides a further social benefit.

During preliminary conversations the idea to have their staff support young entrepreneurs in tackling society's problems has been well received by numerous senior executives at corporate giants including ██████████ to name a few of our 200+ partners; however, WE would open up the program for other businesses that can also contribute including, medium-sized and smaller businesses. This program will include a robust mentorship program, with for-profit partners providing over \$7 million worth (on an annualized basis) of high-value in-kind skill-specific hours from committed subject matter experts across industries, in addition to millions more via discounts on technology and resources to assist these entrepreneurs.

Drawing from 25 years of experience in social entrepreneurship, including building up ME to WE and providing service-learning programs to 7,000+ schools and over 2.4 million youth across Canada, WE has all the ingredients including vision, expert capacity and strategic partnerships to be a unique support platform for the government in enabling the successful execution of a national program that is reflective of today's COVID19 crisis' diverse needs and demands from youth and millions of Canadian looking to assist others as we navigate these challenging times.



Introduction

WE recognizes the immense efforts and investments being led by the Government of Canada's [COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#), supporting strong, immediate and effective action to protect Canadians and our economy from the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Equally important are the complementary economic response plans implemented by other levels of governments directly investing in critical front-line industries and support programs to all Canadians. We are rapidly learning that Canada post-COVID19 pandemic will require a collective effort to rebuild our economy, and where youth are at the heart of creating the greatest value in our economy, bringing innovative solutions to new challenges.

Today, youth at large are becoming more vulnerable and susceptible to the COVID19 pandemic's economic contraction and social limitations despite the GoC's efforts in building safety nets for families, employers and business across Canada. There is a urgent need to proactively support young people between the ages of 19 and 29 who are recent school/university graduates without the opportunity to attain a job, looking for innovative ways to solve current and post COVID19 challenges or build small business, and seeking to build their workplace readiness skills and professional network for when our economy stabilizes.

We know that young Canadians are passionate and committed to finding a career path that provides income, while also creating a positive impact in the world, such as creating employment for at-risk populations, protecting our environment, and assisting with health and human wellness. We have learned through our innovative work with our for-profit social enterprise ME to WE and WE Charity, to marry business with social change and encourage youth to redefine what's possible through the employment of social entrepreneurship skills. Social enterprises – also known as purpose-driven businesses -- create opportunities to encourage and enable priority populations to meaningfully participate in the creation of business ventures that address the unique needs of their community, including jobs and inclusive economic growth. For example, social enterprises are two times more likely to be run by women than traditional small and medium-sized businesses. While the number of purpose-driven businesses in Canada continues to increase, programming and support services available to such enterprises have not kept up with the demand, hence the importance of dedicated initiatives like our proposed social entrepreneurship program.

Now more than ever, WE is galvanizing our corporate partners to collectively support Canadian youth to build resiliency and continue their professional development during and post the COVID19 pandemic. Although our corporate partners have also been deeply impacted by the economic contraction worldwide, many continue to express their desire to offer their employees' in-kind professional support to WE. Many of these are skilled professionals who are now working less hours as a result of the COVID-19 contraction and are passionate about giving back. This program will include a robust mentorship program offering over \$7 million worth (on an annualized basis) of high-value in-kind skill-specific hours from committed subject matter experts across industries, in addition to millions more via discounts on technology and resources to assist these entrepreneurs.



The problem

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly changing the world, the workplace and the economy in unprecedented ways. WE has identified three critical challenges Canadians are facing during this time of economic uncertainty.

- I. Young people and students are currently under-supported in the current economic relief plans. This demographic is not yet well established in the workplace, have had limited earnings or have had their summer jobs eliminated.
- II. With such a dramatic change in the Canadian economy, many small businesses have already vanished so there is a critical need for entrepreneurs to help replenish the lost businesses and create new jobs.
- III. There is an excess of idle and underutilized professionals as Canada's corporate sector has seen a dramatic decline in work. Companies are desperately seeking to repurpose employees or risk eliminating their jobs.

Opportunity

We see an opportunity to support the government in further deepening targeted safety nets to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, *and* further incentivize young Canadians to engage in social entrepreneurship and build community resilience while the economy stabilizes. We know that despite COVID19 isolation measures, young Canadians are passionate and committed to finding a career path that continues to reinforce their skills and provides income, while also creating a positive impact on Canada and the world.

Our social entrepreneurship project is designed to engage youth during and post-COVID19 pandemic, providing a free bilingual virtually delivered entrepreneurship program and one of kind world-class mentorship roster from leading Canadian corporate partners. Although the postsecondary education system is proactively engaging students, we are increasingly seeing the need to target youth who, are looking for non-academic programs that opens opportunities for future employment, are not enrolled in school or, unemployed youth. It is critical to emphasize that youth that engage in entrepreneurial activities not only create new business opportunities, but they also acquire essential skills for the 21st century economy like agility, leadership, collaboration and resilience – important contributions to the workforce as a whole.

We believe that creating a national entrepreneurship program is timely and strategic empowerment for young Canadians to move beyond COVID-19, particularly as we look to break down barriers such as longer transitional periods between finishing school and finding employment, high unemployment rates for out-of-school youth, and children depending on parents for a longer period than ever in our nation's history. Furthermore, we are looking to further support priority populations and underrepresented youth groups (such as Indigenous, women, rural populations, new Canadians) and build unique support services that enable world class mentoring and company creation.

The Solution

Provide up to 8,000 young people across Canada (aged 19-29) with a free, bilingual, inclusive, virtual social entrepreneurship program that provides them with all the tools and mentorship needed to start and grow a successful purpose-driven business.



We believe that a national entrepreneurship program can be developed to not only focus on the youth's entrepreneurship activities but leverage their explicit desire to integrate purpose into their efforts and in turn help alleviate social problems both in Canada and beyond.

Proposed Model

WE Charity's objective is to help launch a new generation of SMBs, powered by purpose-driven young people and ready for the new economic realities. There are three core components to the program:

Part 1: 10-Week Virtual Program	<p>A structured curriculum-based 10-week company formation program delivered as workshops and group advisory sessions by subject matter experts and leaders in entrepreneurship</p> <p>Topics led by industry-experts include: accounting, product design and production, leading with purpose, market development and validation, sales, social impact measurement; digital marketing strategies and content marketing during COVID19; Indigenous enterprise, health and wellness market opportunities, building resilience and perseverance; etc.</p> <p>The program includes various complementary resources and a nation-wide online community for purpose-driven entrepreneurs to share best practices, learning experiences and to network to support one another</p>
Part 2: 1-on-1 mentorship with experts to support entrepreneurs	<p>Extensive 1:1 mentorship and coaching for each participant in the program on business fundamentals by functional experts and industry leaders.</p> <p>Executive coaches and mentors will be provided by an incredible roster of 500+ subject matter experts sourced from across Canada's top corporations.</p> <p>Each participant will have access to a minimum of 6 hours of high-value skill-specific mentorship necessary to help their business thrive. They will register for the mentorship areas of their choice which could include: branding, sales, marketing, legal, accounting/finance, social impact, accessing capital, generalist support.</p>
Part 3: Small grant for each participant	<p>Upon the successful completion of the 10-week program each participant will receive a \$500 grant that they can use to invest in their future and further their venture concept.</p> <p>Upon completion of 10-week program each participant will receive a LinkedIn virtual badge.</p> <p>Additional incentives are available based on engagement and success, including unlocking additional business funding and further stages to the program support.</p>



WE Charity has modeled three options for program delivery, **please see appendix I** for an overview of each of the three options.

Demographics we will serve

The proposed national program will target young people underrepresented within current economic relief plans. Specifically, young people aged 19-29 who are current post-secondary students, recent graduates and recent entrants into the job market who have lost their employment due to COVID-19.

The program is bilingual, designed to ensure inclusive participation and recruitment of participants from priority youth groups including indigenous, women and new Canadians. Our program's digital program delivery platform, program leaders, diverse subject matter experts and incentives effectively targets the youth at all levels of education and can reach areas far from urban centres, provide unique connections with industry experts and essential recognition for youths' efforts respectively.

Why WE is Uniquely Positioned to lead this project

WE has 25 years of experience delivering meaningful and impactful programming to young people across Canada. We are uniquely positioned to take up this challenge as we have the internal expertise and resources to mobilize quickly, and multi-sector partnerships with the corporate, technology, and education to execute on a national scale.

- *Proven Impact:* WE is one of the largest founded in Canada charities, with programs coast-to-coast-to-coast. It uplifts the social sector by galvanizing Canadians across the country to volunteer, increase awareness and raise funds for the causes that matter most to them. In 2018-2019, 3,832 local organizations were supported and over \$97 million in social value was created by Canadians participating in WE programs.¹
- *Deep corporate partnerships:* WE holds deep and unique relationships with 200+ best-in-class corporate partners who are committed to supporting social innovation and the ambitious vision of the WE Social Enterprise Centre.
- *Unparalleled amplification platforms:* Reaching over five million Canadians in 2018-2019 alone, WE is a pipeline to Canadians, including youth, and has the capacity and expertise to support the government in reaching its priorities, raising awareness and creating demand for social enterprise on a national level. WE achieved 4B+ media impressions in 2019, and has 4M+ followers on its Facebook page.
- *Best practices learned through on the ground experience:* WE is approached by several hundred not-for-profit peers, groups and individuals a year and there is a high demand for WE to share learnings from its successes and early failures. WE created the groundbreaking ME to WE social enterprise to support the efficiency of charity partner – WE Charity. ME to WE operates multiple successful lines of business for social purposes.

¹ 2017-2018 WE Schools Year in Review, Global Report; June 2016 Feeding America Product Valuation Study; 2016 US Bureau of Labor Statistics data, indexed by Independent Sector in April 2017.



Our Leadership Team

Our programming will be led by our in-house team of entrepreneurial experts, with a proven track record of training and supporting Canadian entrepreneurs. Our leadership team includes:

Jon E Worren, Entrepreneur in Residence, WE Scale Up

- Served as the Lead Executive, Venture & Corporate Programs at MaRS, where he developed and delivered all of MaRS venture facing programming – both at MaRS and throughout Ontario. As part of his role he built MaRS digital platform, directly serving 10-15,000 entrepreneurs every year, including the award-winning Entrepreneurship 101 program – which has supported entrepreneurs in 130 countries to date. As part of that, Jon has personally worked directly with over 5,000 Canadian entrepreneurs.
- He developed and delivered programming to support youth entrepreneurs at more than 15 university campus linked accelerators as part of Ontario’s Jobs & Prosperity Program.
- Jon also built MaRS Corporate programming, working directly with executive teams of 50+ corporate partners in helping them develop their innovation strategy.
- Jon managed the \$32.5M Ontario ScaleUp Voucher Program from 2016-2019, supporting the growth and expansion of the most promising high-growth innovation firms in the province, such as Fiix, Axonify, InteraXon, Asset Compliance, Bridgit, Wattpad and others with funding and growth coaching.
- Jon is an accomplished entrepreneur having been co-founder of successful businesses in the software and cleantech space. Jon has an MSc from London School of Economics

Hussam Ayyad, Managing Director, WE Scale Up

- Held leadership positions at Communitech, DMZ, Ryerson University and the U of T’s Rotman School of Management are listed below:
 - Built the core-operation of DMZ between 2016 and 2020 including all programs interfacing with entrepreneurs, investors and corporate backers, locally and internationally which most recently propelled the DMZ to become a world-leading tech accelerator and incubator that earned the ranking of #1 in the world by UBI.
 - Built the DMZ’s investor network to exceed 3,000 VCs & Angel investors in less than 2 years.
 - Spearheaded building programs to support thousands of entrepreneurs nationally and internationally and support Canadian ventures who collectively raised over \$ 1 Billion and created multiples of that in value of market capitalization.
- Hussam is an experienced multi-time entrepreneur and business leader. Most notably, he co-founded and led the growth of Algéro Canadian Metals to a \$70 million revenue business in the environmental sustainability industry supplying metal scrap to world leading steel mills.



Craig Kielburger, Co-Founder and Executive Sponsor, WE

- He co-founded WE, a global movement that empowers people with the tools to change the world internationally and in their own communities.
- Craig is a New York Times bestselling author who has written 12 books, including *WEconomy: You Can Find Meaning, Make a Living, and Change the World*.
- Craig is an MBA graduate with 15 honorary doctorates and has been awarded by the World Economic Forum and Roosevelt Institute, and received the Order of Canada.

Roxanne Joyal, CEO and Co-Founder, ME to WE

- She is CEO of ME to WE, a social enterprise that supports sustainable development projects of WE Charity.
- Roxanne is a Francophone bilingual Canadian social entrepreneur, author, recognized leader in sustainable development and a women's empowerment advocate.
- Roxanne is a graduate of Stanford University, she earned an Oxford degree in law and a prestigious Rhodes scholarship, and clerked for the Supreme Court of Canada. She is a recipient of the Order of Canada.

Dalal Al-Waheidi, Executive Director, WE Charity

- As the Executive Director of WE Charity, Dalal Al-Waheidi has been integral in shaping the success of the WE movement into a global international charity and educational partner.
- In 2014, Dalal was selected as one of RBC's Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award winners for her passion and desire to make the world a better place, especially for the lives of youth around the world. In addition, she been recognized by the Women's Executive Network

Our Partners

This project will leverage a multi sector partnership approach, leveraging WE's network. Through value in-kind provided through partnerships, WE will match the financial investment provided by the Government of Canada. Partners could include:

Corporate Partners:

- Engaging WE's network of 200+ corporate partners to provide mentorship hours to young entrepreneurs. WE has already opened conversations with corporate partners, who have expressed a strong interest. They are grateful for the government's 75% wage subsidy, and they want to give-back to support Canada during this time.
- [REDACTED] has been a partner of WE to engage business leaders together to call on their employees enroll in our mentorship program and provide valuable introductions in the sector. [REDACTED]



Technology Partners:

- [REDACTED] WE is the largest Canadian charitable partner [REDACTED] and one of the largest global partners [REDACTED] provides inclusive technology including the provision of hardware and software platforms powering digital programming delivery and ensuring accessibility capabilities (i.e., close captioning translation, readers, visual adaptation and hearing accommodations)
- LinkedIn [REDACTED] partnership with this tech platform would be ideal as it will expose youth's skills attainment after completion of programming, including a virtual badge that can enhance their profile. LinkedIn is a widely recognized platform that will offer young people a space to build their profile, highlight their training badge achieved, and which employers can easily track and validate. The LinkedIn experience has important long-term value, as it will be a validated record that young people can take anywhere in the world to support their education and employment. Digital badging is proving to be the most cost-effective and scalable model to provide incentives for youth to participate. Digital badging provides meaningful recognition to youth, while removing continued reliance and incentive focused on solely financial incentive strategies.

Community Partners:

- WE Charity currently holds 300 official educational partnerships across Canada with 17,309 active educators engaged in our network from 7,000 schools, educational institutions, and groups
- [REDACTED] One of the largest networks of youth programming in entrepreneurship
- [REDACTED] the world's leading Social Entrepreneurship program based in universities and colleges (36 countries worldwide, 1.3 million people impacted annually, 1,730 universities involved). In Canada, they are present with close to 3,500 students involved on campuses
- Many other leading organizations such as:
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]

Conclusion

WE reaches over 2.4 million youth providing a platform to further national understanding about the important role of entrepreneurship to help solve some of the most complex social challenges that we are to experience during and post COVID19 Pandemic. We would like to humbly raise the importance of government taking a leadership role and sending a clear message of hope to youth who are seeing their future very bleak and with limited opportunities to grow at this time.

- Directly impacting up to 8,000 youth
- Providing between 12-20 hours of 1on1 mentorship to youth
- \$500 cash grant to youth upon completion of program



- Building a network of 500 industry leading mentors across Canada to support a new generation of small business with impact
- Targeting priority youth demographics such as, indigenous, women and new Canadians

Together, we can bring a comprehensive future skills program to thousands of youth through digital programming, build a network of resilient youth deeply connected to the across sectors and, who can and will be able to reinsert themselves in the economy in a post COVID19 world.

Appendix I: Program Options

<i>All program options run multiple cohorts over a one-year period</i>			
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Programming delivery details (per cohort)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A structured curriculum-based 10-week company formation program delivered as workshops and group advisory sessions by subject matter experts and leaders in entrepreneurship 6 hours of 1:1 executive mentorship and coaching for each participant in the program on business fundamentals by functional experts and industry leaders for a total of 24,000 hours \$500 grant per participant upon program completion Nation-wide online community for social entrepreneurs to share best practices, learning experiences and network to support one another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A structured curriculum-based 10-week company formation program delivered as workshops and group advisory sessions by subject matter experts and leaders in entrepreneurship 6 hours of 1:1 executive mentorship and coaching for each participant in the program on business fundamentals by functional experts and industry leaders for a total of 48,000 hours \$500 grant per participant upon completion Nation-wide online community for social entrepreneurs to share best practices, learning experiences and network to support one another <p>Plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doubling the number of beneficiaries, with a lower cost per beneficiary due to economies of scale Up to \$800,000 (per entire year) in a special fund available for top participant business ideas Up to 1,000 participants will receive incremental 1-on-1 mentorship time for an additional 12-weeks to support the company building process for an additional 6,000 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A structured curriculum-based 10-week company formation program delivered as workshops and group advisory sessions by subject matter experts and leaders in entrepreneurship 6 hours of 1:1 executive mentorship and coaching for each participant in the program on business fundamentals by functional experts and industry leaders for a total of 48,000 hours \$500 grant per participant upon completion Nation-wide online community for social entrepreneurs to share best practices, learning experiences and network to support one another <p>Plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doubling the number of beneficiaries, with a lower cost per beneficiary due to economies of scale Up to \$800,000 (per entire year) in a special fund available for top participant business ideas Up to 1,000 participants will receive incremental 1-on-1 mentorship time for an additional 12-weeks to support the company building process for an additional 6,000 hours <p>Plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A digital conference with featuring leaders in Canadian business, government, entrepreneurship and social impact – helping to raise the profile of entrepreneurship during times of economic challenge Up to 100 of the top ventures will receive additional mentorship, business support, network access and capital for another 6 months to ensure the successful launch of the businesses for an additional 1,200 hours, in addition to PR and media support through WE’s amplification platforms such as WE Day online, nation-wide news outlets and with direct support from WE’s media and PR staff.
Number of Participants	4,000	8,000	8,000
Investment Requested	\$6,000,000	\$11,000,000	\$14,000,000