ladies learning code

2017 Pre Budget Consultation Submission

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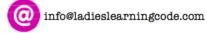**Toronto, ON   M5V 2A9**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ladies Learning Code is a Canadian not-for-profit that runs hands-on technology education programs for women and youth who want to learn beginner-friendly digital skills in a social and collaborative way.

Founded in 2011, Ladies Learning Code's reach and impact have grown exponentially in its first five years. To date, Ladies Learning Code has reached over 45,000 women and youth through programs in 29+ cities across Canada.

Ladies Learning Code's mission is informed by a long-term vision: improving the representation of women in technology and filling Canada's ICT skills gap. In service of this vision, Ladies Learning Code continues to take risks and make bold moves to position itself at the forefront of this movement and to ensure that all Canadians have access to critical 21st century skills training.

In order to reach this ambitious goal, Ladies Learning Code is focused on three key areas:

CANADIANS: Ladies Learning Code teaches women, girls, youth and underserved groups beginner-friendly digital skills and provides them with the tools needed to gain employment and support Canada's economic growth.

CANADIAN BUSINESSES: Ladies Learning Code helps Canadian businesses meet their expansion, innovation and prosperity goals by training the next generation of ICT professionals right here at home.

COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT CANADA: Ladies Learning Code enables people in urban, rural and remote communities to contribute to Canada's economic growth by teaching versatile skills necessary to compete in the global digital jobs market.

With a proven track record of success in engaging diverse communities in 21st century learning experiences, we know our programs work and we want to share it with more young Canadians.

We are looking for a contribution from the Government of Canada of $3 Million over three years ($1 Million per year) to expand our existing programming and inspire the next generation of technologists.

BRIEF

ABOUT LADIES LEARNING CODE

Ladies Learning Code started with a tweet in 2011. The founding team knew there had to be a better way to learn to code than struggling on their own. We launched the first workshop, an Introduction to

JavaScript, on August 6th, 2011 - and tickets sold out in one day. So we planned another workshop. It sold out in 30 seconds.

But that was only the beginning.

Shortly after starting Ladies Learning Code, we realized that it wasn't going to be enough. If we really wanted to have an impact on the number of women in tech, we would need to start younger. So, in early 2012, we launched Girls Learning Code and shortly after Kids Learning Code and Teachers Learning Code - a co-ed program and program for educators to introduce coding in the classroom.

One of the best things about our programs is our commitment to ensuring they're accessible. Thanks to a full or partial scholarships and our pay-what-you-can model, more than half of all participants attend at no cost.

Today, Ladies Learning Code operates 29+ Chapters across Canada. We offer a thriving girls' program called Girls Learning Code, a coed youth program called Kids Learning Code, and a newly-minted program for educators: Teachers Learning Code. We believe technical skills are a tool of empowerment, and it is our mission to ensure that all Canadians - particularly women and youth - have access to learn these critical skills and be active participants in the digital age.

Ladies Learning Code has been featured in major press outlets like Forbes, Financial Post, CBC and the Globe & Mail. We have garnered national support from a strong network of companies including Microsoft, Scotiabank, TELUS, and Google, that support our programming with volunteers, work space and other resources. In addition to our founding team, our Board of Directors includes strong strategic expertise from individuals such as Tobi Lutke, Founder and CEO of Shopify as well as Justin LaFayette, Founder and CEO of Georgian Partners.

In order to reach its ambitious goals, Ladies Learning Code has initiated two cross-country movements: National Learn to Code Day and National Girls Learning Code Day. These events are the first of their kind in Canada. These National Days celebrate technology learning across the country by offering beginner-friendly workshops. Ladies Learning Code also launched a new project in 2016, the code:mobile: a cross-Canada road trip which drives a computer lab in a truck across the country this Summer exposing 10,000+ kids to code in over 60 urban and rural communities.

OUR FOOTPRINT AND REACH IN CANADA

With a presence in over 29 cities coast to coast, Ladies Learning Code is one of the first and largest national organizations offer computer science education in Canada.

Barrie	Lethbridge	St. John's
Burnaby	London	Saskatoon
Calgary	Moncton	Sudbury
Charlottetown	Nanaimo	Sydney
Edmonton	Niagara	Toronto
Fredericton	Ottawa	Vancouver
Halifax	Peterborough	Victoria
Hamilton	Quebec City	Waterloo
Kingston	Red Deer	Winnipeg
Kitchener	Saint John	Whitehorse

Here's an overview of our reach and impact:

29+ Chapter cities nationwide
850+ workshops since 2011
24,000+ adult participants
21,000+ youth participants
3,500+ volunteer mentors

That's over 250,000 hours of coding!

Here are a few stories from our community:

Jessica Duarte
Jessica entered her first Ladies Learning Code workshop as a complete beginner two years ago and now is a full-time web developer working on Fortune 500 company websites.

Abi Smithson
Abi, age 11, has attended many of our programs and through an Entrepreneurship camp was inspired to create the 'Love Sandal' and now runs a growing business.

Katherine Laliberte
Katherine has taken several of our workshops and has since quit her job as a lawyer to manage her family restaurants' presence online and has started to take on other paid development work.

Shuli Jones
Shuli, as a 6th grader, attended the very first Girls Learning Code camp, back in 2012. She is now a sophomore in high school and recently scored the highest grade on the AP Computer Science A exam and is pursuing CS in university.

In five short years, we've had huge reach and impact while remaining largely self-funded through program fees and donations. We've almost doubled our budget and reach year-over-year, attracting the support of organizations like Microsoft, Scotiabank, TELUS, Google, Shopify and more - all who recognize our impact and mechanism for scale and impact. Our team at Ladies Learning Code are impact maximalists and we're committed to providing our community the most value we can by leveraging our extensive volunteer network and maintaining our scrappy start-up culture.

To date, our cumulative budget has been under $2.5M to teach over 45,000 Canadians. That's approximately $55 per Canadian and includes the investment in development and design of scalable programs and processes.

We are ready to scale up our programs and provide even more Canadian women and girls with the opportunity to code. With the Government of Canada as a partner, we can get there.

CANADA'S DIGITAL FUTURE

There's little argument that technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in our society. It touches almost everything we do, see and eat, and that isn't going to change anytime soon. Virtual reality, 3D printing, nanotechnology and self driving cars are all examples of recent innovations that have dramatically changed our reality, yet we've only started to scratch the surface of what's possible in the years to come. These innovations, among others, have the power to change the world - the way we engage and interact with one another, how we cure disease, reduce fatalities and more. Technology is the future.

But we are faced with two separate yet deeply connected issues when it comes to building that future:

1. A shortage of qualified workers

According to the Information & Communications Technology Council's (ICTC's) recent Digital Talent Strategy report, technology jobs will be the fastest growing occupations with an estimated shortage of more than 200,000 people to fill roles in Canada by 2020.

2. A shortage of women in the tech industry

As it stands, only 21% of all computer sciences graduates are women. After graduation, only about 25% of all technology roles are held by women, highlighting unacceptable attrition rates for women in the industry

ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) SECTOR

THE NEED

Women and visible minorities are significantly underrepresented in the creation of technology. According to recent research by ICTC, less than 25% of ICT workers are women and less than 3% are Indigenous peoples.

Canada's future is in code, and ensuring that technology is built by a group as representative as those using it is an important domestic issue. If we want to solve this problem and have our country prosper in the digital world, **we need to engage more women and visible minorities in the creation of technology, and we need to teach more Canadians to code.**

THE OPPORTUNITY

As the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Discussion Paper "Women in Tech as a Driver for Growth in Emerging Economies" argues, increasing the participation of women in the ICT labour force would help bridge the gap of technical roles, but women are not yet able to take full advantage of this growing sector. Even at home in Canada, engaging women in the ICT workforce will help close the gap and research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that reducing the gender gap in the labour force could result in an estimated increase in GDP of close to 10 per cent in Canada.

As Prime Minister Trudeau said at the recent World Economic Forum, "If you are looking for a country that has the diversity, the resilience, the positivity and the confidence to not just manage this change but take advantage of it, there has never been a better time to look to Canada."

We agree. However, we're falling behind other countries and falling short of what Canada is capable of.

At Ladies Learning Code, we believe technology has the power to truly change the world. In our work over the past five years, we've come across many of the challenges and obstacles facing women and girls to engage fully in technology, ranging from a lack of access to learning experiences to hostile work environments to a lack of confidence and fear of failure. These issues are further complicated with additional factors such as cultural diversity and accessibility. Closing the gender gap in technology is a

long term play - but we believe now is the time for action.

We need to invest more resources, earlier, in technology education.

Getting girls and young women excited about ICT does not need to wait until high school or post-secondary education - it can happen much earlier. Looking globally, the UK, Estonia and Australia, among others, have mandated coding education for youth as young as 5 years old.

We are proud and excited to be pioneering this movement in communities across Canada, however it is a collective responsibility to provide Canadians with opportunities to learn about technology, and pursue careers in the information & technology sector. It is also the best way to ensure Canada stays entrepreneurial, creative, and competitive in a digital world.

The Government of Canada can help address this challenge by setting out a bold, thoughtful plan to invest in Canada's tech sector, and to teach women and youth critical digital skills that will allow them to thrive in the jobs of today and more importantly, build our tomorrow.

THE ASK

Ladies Learning Code has a proven track record, a formula for successful programming and a critical and valuable understanding of the importance of inclusivity - especially for women and girls. We're looking to work with the Government of Canada to help us broaden our mission and reach.

We're seeking $3 million over three years to increase the reach of our programming throughout the country. Specifically, these resources will be used to:
- Expand to new communities → from 29 Chapter cities to 50
- Offer more programming in existing communities → launch Girls Learning Code and Kids Learning Code in all cities we're currently operating in
- To teach 6,500+ traditional educators how to introduce coding in their classroom through Teachers Learning Code
- Keep our code:mobile (Canada's first coding truck) on the road year-round teaching pop-up computer programming workshops in underserved communities

CONCLUSION

Ladies Learning Code has successfully been running programming for women, girls, youth and underserved groups for five years, and we consistently deliver high-quality programs that are innovative and impactful, pushing boundaries and staying relevant with our target community. We've made a huge impact with very little, and we're confident that an investment from the Government of Canada will provide us a springboard to scale up and provide meaningful technology education experiences coast-to-coast-to-coast, allowing our communities and businesses to thrive in a more inclusive and innovative Canada.