Women's Empowerment Conference

United States
Laura Lecour
Organization type: nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Budget: < $1,000
Website: http://www.ruralmigrantministry.org

- Adult education
- Intergenerational relations
- Education
- Mentorship
- Vulnerable populations
- Women's issues

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The Conference helps underserved women build confidence, skills and support systems to educate/empower themselves for change. Barriers include poverty, prejudice, language, isolation, gender violence, lack of childcare and transportation and a lack of skills to take advantage of resources and/or opportunities. The younger women lack role model. The Conference bridges gaps by bringing allies to them.

About You

Organization:
Mid Hudson Catskill Rural & Migrant Ministry
Visit website

Section 1: About You

First Name
Laura
Last Name
Lecour
Website
http://www.ruralmigrantministry.org
Country

Section 2: About Your Organization

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?
Yes

Organization Name
Mid Hudson Catskill Rural & Migrant Ministry

Organization Phone
845-485-8627

Organization Address
Organization Country

How long has this organization been operating?
15 years

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.
What makes your idea unique?
The Rural Women’s Conference is a unique opportunity for rural women isolated by language, culture and lack of resources to connect and gain strength from one another, their allies, and workshop leaders as they develop strategies for change through education. Over 100 rural women, teenagers to elders gather, cutting across racial, cultural, geographic and class boundaries. These women seek better economic conditions and educational opportunities for themselves and their children, as well as improved health care. The Conference gives women the unique opportunity to learn from social organizations and rural experts. The workshops are a starting point for them to learn about how to continue their education, become advocates for themselves and their families in doctors’ offices and school, as well as in their own homes. Women and girls are encouraged to develop their voices and share their stories.

Rural women face many barriers, ie. economic, language, time, and distance. The nature of the work they do, farmworking, provides no time, resources, childcare nor the transportation to seek out methods of bettering their lives, nor the lives of their children. One of the most impressive aspects of the Rural Women’s Conference is seeing isolated farmworker women gather for their own conference. Amazingly, a native Mexican farmworker who spoke no English sits next to an African-American former farmworker and thanks to translation, shares her story, helping to build important bridges. An elderly woman and a teenager, talk about how to deal with racism in the schools and both experience hope. A workshop leader reaches a group she may never have considered. Secondary beneficiaries - diverse agency’s representatives are inspired by these rural voices.

Do you have a patent for this idea?

Tell us about the social impact of your innovation. Please include both numbers and stories as evidence of this impact

Our goal is to strengthen the network of disadvantaged rural women and allies who are committed to creating opportunities for rural women and their families to educate themselves and others, to develop a voice and to be heard. One woman, who had discovered a lump in her breast was encouraged to see a doctor after a breast cancer awareness workshop and was able to begin her healing. A native Mexican farmworker who spoke no English sits next to an African-American former farmworker and, thanks to translation, shared her story, helping to build important bridges. An elderly woman sat next to a young teenage woman and talked about how to deal with racism in the schools and both experienced hope. Last year, the conference supported the development of a workshop on gender violence – developed and presented by these young women. Intergenerational participants are affirmed and inspired by sharing their stories with others who come from similar situations and are empowered by the resources that supporting organizations bring, and they are able to leave with concrete information and to create networks (informal and formal) with other participants and with supportive organizations. Workshops have included topics such as Breaking the Cycles of Domestic Violence/ Dating Abuse, Financial Aid, College Application Maze, Career Development, GED, Self-Realization, Community Building, Creativity, Communicating with your Adolescent and Breast Cancer Awareness.

Problem: Describe the primary problem(s) that your innovation is addressing

The Conference’s purpose is to help underserved women build the confidence, the skills and support systems to educate and empower themselves for change. These women face barriers of poverty, prejudice, language, geographical and cultural isolation and a lack of skills to create, or take advantage of resources and/or opportunities. Many deal with gender violence, and lack support systems such as childcare and transportation. The younger women lack experience as well as role models. The conference bridges these gaps by bringing them and the educational resources to a central location. We also provide transportation, translation, and childcare.

We know that there is great interest and need (every year we have to turn women away), but we are lacking in the resources to expand the awareness and support of the Conference. We believe we can build the numbers of participants, which will enhance the possibility of the gathering to become self-sustaining.

Actions: Describe the steps that you are taking to make your innovation a success. What might prevent that success?

This conference addresses the issues and hopes of rural women’s lives in a practical and holistic manner. We provide the transportation to the conference from all across New York State. We provide childcare by a professional Child Care Provider. We also provide Translation/Interpretation so that anyone can participate fully. There are numerous organizations throughout NYS that RMM reaches out to and who participate in this project although they are not official collaborators. These include grass-roots associations, non-profit organizations, congregations and educational institutions. In order to recruit participants, the Rural Women's Conference is advertised throughout the year in RMM Notes, our online monthly newsletter as well as having its own webpage on our website www.ruralmigrantministry.org

We have printed a brochure which we mail and hand out at different educational fairs and we encourage women to come. We also raise funds by grantwriting.

Results: Describe the expected results of these actions over the next three years. Please address each year separately, if possible

We would love to be able to increase the number of participants from 100 to 250 by being able to afford to provide scholarships, transportation and childcare to every woman who desired to be a participant. We would love to be able to expand the number of ally participants from universities, organizations and congregations that are able to offer informational tables and workshops.

We would like to be able to extend the Conference and make it a two night conference so that the participants would have more down time to network informally. For many of our participants this is the first time they have been away from home or stayed at a hotel.

We continue to invite women from diverse agencies and locations in order to increase the number of participants who will benefit from the conference. We hope that casting this net widely will help us to develop greater financial support to ensure greater participation, especially since our participants are from low income communities.

How many people will your project serve annually?

101 1000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?
$100  1000

Does your innovation seek to have an impact on public policy?
No

If your innovation seeks to impact public policy, how?
Approximately 150 words left (1200 characters).

---

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?
Operating for 15 years

Does your organization have a board of directors or an advisory board?
Yes

Does your organization have a non monetary partnerships with NGOs?
No

Does your organization have a non monetary partnerships with businesses?
No

Does your organization have a non monetary partnerships with government?
No

Please tell us more about how partnerships could be critical to the success of your innovation
Approximately 250 words left (1200 characters).

We would like to learn more about how your initiative is financially supported. Please explain your business plan/revenue model
Approximately 250 words left (2000 characters).

---

The Story

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?
This innovation is a direct outgrowth of the Mission of Rural & Migrant Ministry which is to work for the creation of a just rural New York State by:
• Nurturing leadership
• Standing with the disenfranchised, especially farmworkers and rural workers
• Changing unjust systems and structures
The Destiny: Rural Women's Conference, sponsored by RMM is planned, facilitated, and led by women, for women. I have been a participant as a Translator/Interpreter as well as by being the Managing Director of RMM and it is my pleasure to work with Ruth Faircloth, the Director of the Conference, as well as with Jane Konitz, Special Project Volunteer and former Board member, and with the young women of our Youth Empowerment Program and Youth Arts Group to make this a successful, gratifying and inspiring experience for rural women and their allies. My interest in manifesting justice brought me to RMM and the Rural Women's Conference brings together a remarkable diversity of women, from many different cultures, generations, backgrounds and socio-economic status who want to work for justice and bring about change.

Tell us about the person—the social innovator—behind this idea.
Recognizing that the life of children from poor, rural, and sometimes migrant, farmworker households included not only experiences of prejudice and inequality but also extreme economic deprivation, isolation, the dire effects of increased mobility and their resultant risk factors, RMM was originally incorporated as a non-profit, 501(c) 3 organization to welcome farmworkers to the Hudson Valley and in so doing, provide a sense of community, continuity and belonging. RMM’s Summer Camp, funded entirely through private donors and foundations began in 1989 for rural and migrant children, many of whom were either in summer school, working or migrating and would not have had such an opportunity. One day in 1989, two of the mother's of children at the camp, a mother and daughter, Ruth Faircloth and Betty Monroe thought about starting a support group for women in the rural and farmworking areas of the Hudson Valley in NY, which would combat issues of isolation and loneliness. They took their idea to Rev. Gail Keeney-Mulligan of Rural & Migrant Ministry. She responded that if they found the women she would find them a place and thus the Daughters of Sarah was born. The first meeting had 38 women. Rather than running the meeting, the Reverend Gail sat back and encouraged them to take the reins of their own destiny. For 20 years The Daughters of Sarah has continued to develop leadership and empowerment programs including retreats, dinners and opportunities of community service, which had led to the building of an outreach network of rural women. Rural & Migrant Ministry as been there every step of the way, providing support and encouragement. The Destiny: Rural Women's Conference is a direct result of this vision and collaboration.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?
Email from Changemakers

If through another source, please provide the information

ICRW

Does your project address any of the following barriers to women’s technology access and use?
Women’s time poverty, Social norms, Economic or institutional constraints.

If you checked any of the boxes above, please explain how.
Approximately 250 words left (2000 characters).

Does your project involve women in one or more of the following stages of the technology lifecycle? Identification of the problem the
technology will solve:

If you checked any of the boxes above, please explain how you will ensure women’s involvement in each relevant phase of the technology lifecycle.

Approximately 250 words left (2000 characters).

If women are a focus of your project, how did this focus evolve?

The project focused on women from its conception..

Which type of women will your project reach directly?

Rural.

In what ways does your project team/leadership involve women?

It is led by a woman/women..

Has your organization formed any new partnerships in response to this challenge? If so, with what type/s of organization/s?

Has your project leadership had prior experience with the following?

Working with women, Working to increase women's economic empowerment through technology.

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/technologywomen/entries/womens-empowerment-conference#comment-0