

MAYORS CHALLENGE

The 2017 Mayors Challenge Application

~ Linda Tyer | Pittsfield ~

— SUMMARY —

a

Elevator Pitch

Imagine you ran into Mike Bloomberg in an elevator and had to pitch him on your idea. How would you make a clear, compelling case for both the problem facing your city and how your idea will address it? Be sure to include specific examples and data.

Pittsfield, Massachusetts is a post-industrial city in the midst of rebuilding its community and economic vitality. As we rise-up by growing community and economic diversity, we must put an emphasis on lifting up those who struggle to achieve their greatest potential. Like many urban cities, Pittsfield is plagued by an entrenched culture of gang, gun, and drug violence. The persistence of poverty and family instability impacts youth development. Compared to the state, Berkshire County has higher rates of children living in poverty, greater unemployment, more single family households, and greater income disparity (County Health Rankings, Robert Wood Johnson). According to the most recent Berkshire Community Health Needs Assessment births to mothers ages 15-19 in Pittsfield is substantially higher than the county and state average. The specter of youth suicide/suicidal behavior, the second leading cause of death among 15-21 year olds (9.8%) is more prevalent compared to the state average (7%). Young women in particular must believe they can survive and thrive beyond the constraints of these limiting boundaries. We propose to build a “Life Academy for Young Women.” The residential component is for young women aged 16-21 who lack a continuity of support. Young women will have access to housing and holistic services to help them develop life skills, provide access to education, jobs opportunities, workforce training, and wellness programs. Life Academy will be a hub of activity, and resources for young women in the community to ensure full access to a supportive community, mentoring and services to promote well-being.

b

People Affected

Estimate the number of people your problem affects. Provide a brief explanation of how you came to this number.

Pittsfield is an aging community experiencing an increase in residents over 65 and a decrease in the 19 years and under population. The demographics are shifting with outward migration and an increase of immigrant families settling in the area. Shifting demographics may create greater isolation and disparity. To achieve community and economic vitality, the city must invest in its young people who will lead the way. It is estimated that 1,000 young women will be directly impacted. While the focus is on a target population, the ripple effects will be felt across the city.

C

People Helped

Estimate the number of people your idea will help when it is fully implemented. Provide a brief explanation of how you came to this number.

There are approximately 1,800 young women between the ages of 15-21 living in Pittsfield per recent population reports. The residential portion of the Life Academy will serve up to 20 young women. Through community outreach to schools and other youth serving agencies, Life Academy will reach a total of 1,000 young women through group activities, college visits, mentorships, and safe, pro-social activities. In addition to direct service, Life Academy will offer professional development and consultation to other community organizations serving young women. Growing protective factors for women in turn helps to mitigate risks for all young people.

d

Categorize Your Solution

Is your solution primarily (a) solving an issue-specific problem, or (b) improving the way city government works? (choose one only)

- **The way government works:**
- *Create Government Efficiencies*
- *Improve Customer Service*
- *Increase Public Engagement*
- *Other*
- **Issue-specific:**
- *Economic & Workforce Development*
- *Education & Youth Development*
- *Income Inequality & Social Inclusion*
- *Health and Wellbeing*
- *Homelessness*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Neighborhoods, Housing & Blight*
- *Public Safety*
- *Parks & Recreation*
- *Climate*
- *Other*

- Education & Youth Development

e

Investigative Methods

Which methods below did you use to investigate the problem and come up with your idea?

- *Quantitative Data Analysis*
- *Qualitative research, such as interviewing or shadowing residents*
- *Innovation methods such as journey mapping or stakeholder mapping*
- *Open call or ideas competition*
- *Engaging front-line city staff*
- *Engaging partners outside government to offer different skills and perspectives*
- *Other*

- Quantitative Data Analysis
- Qualitative research, such as interviewing or shadowing residents
- Engaging front-line city staff
- Engaging partners outside government to offer different skills and perspectives

— DEFINE THE PROBLEM —

1

The Problem

What is the problem you aim to solve?

To strengthen the social fabric of Pittsfield, with its aging demographics, we must strengthen the purpose, resilience and economic success of vulnerable young women.

2

Impact on Citizens

What is the current and long-term impact of this problem on the citizens of your city? How did you quantify this impact? If the problem is not addressed, what will be the consequences?

The decline in population dates back to the 1970s. As manufacturing jobs disappeared young people left to pursue other opportunities. While there is a growing the economy, the city has yet to rebound from the significant loss of well-paying jobs. Nearly, 1 in 4 residents has an income below the poverty rate. The poverty rate for children living in Pittsfield is 28.8% compared to 14.5% for the state. The impact of poverty is well documented and affects all aspects of individual and community life. As this initiative grows, the impact of the ROPE cultural development at the heart of the project will be transformative, creating positive effects across the citizenry. Small post-industrial cities have been described to the point of compassion fatigue. Real insight about young people's experience comes from other young people. For disenfranchised youth, there can be the sense of being adrift without a compass, knowing that the traditional pathways to a middle class life are gone, and clear new pathways have not appeared. At the same time, social resources are few, and the fabric of families has become threadbare under the constant stress of making a living at low wage work and struggling to be parents and community participants. The secondary impacts of substance abuse and violence are a very present feature of this life. Add to it the illegal economy, the gangs and guns, and the stress on the social fabric reaches the breaking point. This initiative fundamentally targets the need to rebuild social capital for the most vulnerable among us. The activities of this

initiative will help young people find new pathways to opportunity, and reduce the need for young people to leave in order to succeed. The balance of a healthy community can be restored.

— DESCRIBE THE IMPACT OF YOUR IDEA —

3

Idea

Describe your big idea to address the problem. If your idea is successful, how will the world be different in three years? What are the main activities and how will these lead to the desired changes?

The goal of the initiative is to inspire young women between the ages of 16-21 who may be at-risk for homelessness; to help them aspire to a future that captures the best of their imagination and builds on their potential by instilling confidence and building competence through a comprehensive set of strategies including supported living, education and job coaching, self-development, mentoring, and building citizenship. Young women who experience personal and historical trauma are vulnerable to violence, crime, sexual exploitation, substance abuse, and unplanned premature pregnancies. Providing an alternative path filled with hope and opportunity leads to strong, capable women who become contributing citizens. They, in turn, lift- up their families and build resilient communities. There are no resources outside of state systems available to the estimated 2-5% of young women without children who experience homelessness. This population falls through the cracks, becoming part of a generation lost to the streets. The initiative builds on individual and community assets extending successful programming and paving the way for new collaborations. In 2010, a group of local citizens seeking to support young women of color with the transition to adulthood, created the Rites of Passage and Empowerment (ROPE) program, which offers classes focused on exploring self-worth, self-esteem, interests, skills, resilience, cultural competence, women's history, and the arts. It also includes college tours, international travel, and a strong mentoring component. The underpinning philosophy of ROPE combined with a culturally rich and stimulating living environment creates the emotional, physical, and psychological safety needed to explore higher levels of self-development. The initiative taps into traditional educational and social services as well as the riches of the Berkshires—the bountiful natural environment and plentiful arts and cultural experiences. Other partners include the four area colleges, business and faith communities, and women who have walked the path.

4

Previous Efforts

All "new" ideas stand on the shoulders of ideas that came before. Tell us about other efforts that have inspired or informed aspects of your idea.

Unlike other supported-living situations which can only be accessed through child welfare, juvenile justice, or mental health systems, this project provides safe, stable housing with associated supports to promote well-being. The idea, which builds on concepts from the best of settlement houses of by-gone years, includes elements from indigenous cultures that value the importance of community in creating and upholding norms, incorporates evidence-based principles of youth development, and expands the successful ROPE cultural intervention.

5

Outside Contributions

Great ideas often come from unexpected places and people. What were the greatest contributions (ideas, suggestions, problem framing, etc.) from sources outside of your government?

Grass-roots advocacy thrives in Pittsfield. Listening sessions were held around the city to engage local citizens in creating a safe, thriving, and just community. Founders, mentors, and the young women impacted by ROPE regularly participate in community forums to give voice to issues, challenge assumptions, and offer solutions. For the last two years, there has been on-going dialogue with the Mayor's Office about the importance of reaching out to a lost generation of women. From this, grew the idea for the Life Academy as a way to wrap-around and harness the untapped potential of an undervalued segment of the community. The initiative is informed by the experience of young women who are directly impacted and by the wisdom of women who came before. Their voice must remain in the forefront or this will become another imposed solution tied to a bureaucracy that has failed the young women time and again.

6

Innovative Idea

What makes your idea innovative? How is the approach unexpected and new to the city? If your idea builds on an existing idea from another city (or your own), please be explicit about the elements that are new.

The heart of this initiative is found in ROPE's approach to transforming the lives of young women through a process of discovery grounded in knowledge and pride of cultural history, celebration and honor of the transition to womanhood, and deep connections to others who have traveled the path before. The transformation of the City of Pittsfield in many ways mirrors the experience of the young women impacted by this initiative. Healing, growth and resilience comes from a sense of knowing where you came from, where you are going, and how the world will be a better place because of your contribution. The process must be inclusive of all, inspire hope and pride, lift the most vulnerable, and create safe space for critical conversations. Conditions are being set that allow for the co-creation of ideas that develop and evolve over time involving those who are most impacted. The innovation comes through the process, rather than through a defined and confining programmatic approach. Once the City becomes more proficient in using this type of process, the transferability is limitless. Creating a community of practice will require the same diligence and attention to core principles of inclusiveness and change management.

— SHOW THE IMPACT OF YOUR IDEA —

7

Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Outline what the a. immediate outputs, b. short-term outcomes, and c. long-term impacts will be if your idea is implemented successfully. Please indicate the dates by which you expect to achieve those outputs, outcomes and impacts. Include the major milestones for each of the first three years. Assume a March 1, 2018 start date, which is when testing is slated to begin for Champion Cities.

Immediate

During the first year, we will test the idea of expanding the ROPE experience to at least 100 more young women in order to affirm assumptions. We will enlist the commitment of community partners, identify a site for the Life Academy and finalize the design for the residential component. Program development coordinators will work closely with the Mayor's Office to ensure the work plan is

Outputs

completed. This “learning as doing” phase of the project will result in young women participating in an educational or vocational program, identifying supportive community connections, and participating in at least one civic activity.

Short-term

Outcomes

The residential portion of Life Academy will be fully implemented by the end of the second year serving at least 20 young women who would otherwise be homeless or unstably housed. Life Academy will host a variety of high interest, high impact offerings and continue community outreach.

Long-term

Impacts

Learnings will be shared in the third year through forums, consultation, professional development, and technical assistance to create a shared community practice with common values, practices, and approaches to achieve broader community impact. Individual gains will be achieved in the following areas: health and well-being, education and employment, housing, social connections, and civic engagement.

8

Impact on Residents

How will residents know about this idea and how will it affect them within 12 months of implementation?

From the start, young women of transition age will have a leadership role in guiding the development of the initiative. ROPE participants and alumni, mentors, and other community stakeholders will be core participants on a Governance Council. They will receive the guidance and coaching needed to become ambassadors who can assist with outreach to other young women, community partners, funders, and allies. Based on interest and skills, others may take on other aspects of planning such as social media, data collection, and meeting facilitation. Stipends will be provided to those who step into formal roles. Women who previously traveled in isolation and despair will be nurtured, accepted, and have access to concrete supports. Overtime, the community as a whole will begin to see young women as vital contributors to the economic and civic revival of Pittsfield with measurable changes in work-readiness, witness an increase population amongst 20-30 year olds, and observe greater civic involvement of 20-30 year olds.

— DEVELOP A PLAN —

9

Work Streams

Outline the key activities and anticipated dates for key phases of your implementation by using the template below.

Note: For this template, please list the major workstreams required to implement your solution at scale – but please limit to the top 5 workstreams. Include the major milestones for each of the first three years. Assume a March 1, 2018 start date, which is when testing is slated to begin for Champion Cities.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gBMcXksszqlx3j8hPaxmznPxa8uoi5pQq1X-kFjvNvI/edit>

For a bold idea to come to life, it requires thoughtful planning. Identify the major workstreams you've identified to implement your idea, and the major milestones associated with those workstreams over time.				
Workstream	Description	Major Milestones		
List up to 5 workstreams	Provide a brief description of the workstream	List up to 5 milestones for each workstream		
		Milestone	Target Date	
1	Creating Community Commitment	Building consensus on strengths and needs of young women in Pitttsfield	Hire Program Development Coordinators	March 2018
			Organize youth leaders using positive youth development strategies	April-June 2018
			Mentors and informal supports organized	April - June 2018
			Cross-sector of partners engaged and involved	April -June 2018
			Continuum of services defined/consensus established on the goals of the initiative and shared values	September 2018
2	Establishing robust governance	Group of stakeholders, leaders, youth participants who design and oversee the project	Establish Governance Council	June 2018
			Develop structure for decision-making	June 2018
			Convene meetings on at least a monthly basis	September-2018

			Provide training on cultural competency, positive youth development, and restorative conversations	December-2018
			Outline tasks and responsibilities	October-2018
3	Outreach as Participant Empowerment	A broad-based engagement strategy that helps all young women develop the skills and relationships to successfully transition to adulthood	Outreach to schools, youth serving organizations, faith communities, homeless shelters and other places where young women gather	September - December 2018
			Expand pool of mentors	September - December 2018
			Offer a variety of positive youth engagement activities	January-August 2019
4	Life Academy	Secure a building, staff and finalize operating procedures to offer residential option for up to 20 girls	Secure location	June-2019
			Make necessary renovations, equip and furnish	September-2019
			Finalize operating procedures, programming and schedule	December-2019
			Hire and train staff	January-2019
			Accept participants	February-2019
5	Establish Community of Practice	Establish common values, practices, and approaches to support youth of transition age	Convene youth and adult partners	September-2018
			Review community data	December-2018
			Assess strengths and needs of positive, culturally grounded youth development practice	April-2019
			Develop consulting and TA model	September-2019

10

Testing Your Idea

What assumptions, and/or components of your idea will you test if you are selected as a Champion City? (As a reminder, up to 35 Champion Cities will be selected to test their idea.) How will you incorporate what you learn to increase the likelihood of success for the overall initiative?

Much work has been done over the last few years to increase the awareness of cultural competence through workplace and community trainings. The Pittsfield Public School system has made a concerted effort to train staff and implement culturally informed practices as have many community organizations and businesses. Early results suggest that the community is ready to embrace a strategy for positive youth development (and community planning in general) that is rooted in shared power, positive regard, and acceptance of uncertainty that comes with co-creation. We believe we can create a unifying set of guiding principles that honors individual experiences through restorative approaches to heal and aspirational activities to inspire which will then build a community of practice. With intention, the process will be designed to pull people into the fold rather than to push something onto them. Another critical assumption to test is that this project will bridge the experience desired by young women and the regulations that guide child welfare, housing, and other social services. This will require great flexibility and ingenuity, and may in fact, is the biggest hurdle.

11

Risk Factors

What are the three greatest risks to the success of your idea and why? If you are selected as a Champion City (as a reminder, up to 35 cities will be selected to test their idea), will you use the testing phase to understand how to minimize any of these risks? If so, how?

Failure to honor the experience of young women will undermine the initiative and further alienate a population that has experienced the harsh realities of systems designed to help. Planning must give voice to the experience of young women, be inclusive, and incorporate shared decision-making. This becomes more complicated when negotiating the complexities of systems guided by policies and mandates, which at times conflict with the expressed needs of participants, as is the case in situations of custody and decision-making for a young person under the age of 18 who has been turned away by her family and has no place to go. The deeply entrenched system of issues must be approached with sensitivity, trust, and openness to address the underlying issue in creative ways that comply with the “spirit of the law” and with an understanding that in some circumstances options are limited. Building a case for sustainable funding must be a priority from the beginning. This includes capturing the data and stories in a compelling way, building community support, and cultivating donors. The success of young women will become the success of the initiative as they share their story and find ways to “pay forward” their wisdom to others.

12

Resident Involvement

How will citizens and other groups be involved in your implementation, and what will their level of involvement be?

A Governance Council including young women, community stakeholders, and representatives from local colleges, businesses, and faith communities will be convened. Roles and responsibilities will be established in the first quarter of the project. Students from local colleges will be engaged through service-learning projects and mentoring opportunities. Partnerships will be established to ensure timely access to services. Mentors will be recruited, trained, and supported to provide encouragement and life wisdom to boost confidence during low times, celebrate victories, and navigate rough waters. The group will work closely with local and state officials to educate and advocate for needed policy changes.

13

Project Budget Estimate

What is the best estimate of the cost to implement and sustain your idea? Please answer this question using the budget form below.

Note: *For the full-scale implementation budget, create your budget for the first three years which should include launch and bringing the idea to full scale. Please also list the anticipated sources of funding in the Sources table. In the sources table, please assume a grant of \$1 million.*

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Zi3OQhJ_YIKaP7p5Hfan5QqHN3jswFe1ARn0qJ1of3s/edit

Full-scale Implementation Costs	
	Costs
Labor (staff salaries)	
Director	USD 55,000
Development Coordinator	USD 45,000
Two House Parents	USD 50,000
Clinician/family liaison	USD 45,000
Benefits (25 percent)	\$48,750
Sub-Contracts/Consulting	
Stipends for ROPE participants	USD 9,500

Travel/Meetings/Workshops (Travel related to grant activities)	
Transportation for the young women	USD 5,000
Advertising/Media/Communications	
Publicity	USD 500
Supplies	
Food and incidentals	USD 24,000
Programming support	USD 5,000
Equipment	
furnishings/fit out	USD 95,000
technology	USD 5,000
Other Direct Costs	
Property acquisition	USD 500,000
Closing costs	USD 5,000
Renovations for code compliance	USD 250,000
Facility maintenance and utilities	USD 35,000
Total	USD 1,129,000

Sources	Implementation
[Other sources: e.g. Grant from Department of Education, etc.]	
Mayors Challenge Grant	USD 1,000,000
State assistance through social services	
Funding from community partners	
Total	USD 1,000,000

Balance (total sources minus total costs)	-USD 129,000
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***Funding gap to be met by potential state grants and community partners.

14

Testing Phase Budget Estimate

How much will it cost to complete the tests outlined in question 10 and question 11? Please answer this question using the budget forms below. **Note:** For the testing phase, Bloomberg Philanthropies will award Champion Cities up to \$100,000 to supporting a testing phase of ~6 months. You should budget for only the amount needed to implement the tests you have outlined in question 10 and question 11.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EzQlxjRiO8wudvoAjLeHCoQw4AwJFYoQtMNkVM-z8fM/edit>

Testing Phase Costs	
	Costs
Labor (staff salaries)	
Program Development Leaders	USD 50,000
Sub-Contracts/Consulting	
Use and Description 1	
Travel/Meetings/Workshops (Travel related to grant activities)	
Use and Description 1	
Advertising/Media/Communications	
Use and Description 1	
Supplies	
Steering Committee (facilities and materials)	USD 2,500
Equipment	
Use and Description 1	
Other Direct Costs	
Research and metrics	USD 25,000
Outreach and surveying	USD 15,000
Transportation	USD 7,500
Total	USD 100,000

— BUILD SUPPORT FOR YOUR IDEA —

15

Alignment with Mayor or Chief Executive

How does this idea align with your Mayor or Chief Executive's priorities? How will he or she actively champion this idea?

“How can we?” Mayor Tyler asked of her leadership team at the start of her administration and it has become embedded in the city’s organizational culture. The idea is to inspire those who work in local government to think about their profession comprehensively and collaboratively to yield the greatest impact for citizens. This question serves as a guidepost for the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge by proposing to help young women in the community to achieve their highest potential which, for many, is unrealized and in danger of being squandered. The Life Academy answers the Mayor’s call by creating a place of warm embrace for young women to develop, transform, heal, and thrive. It will be their home and hearth where they can safely tap into their potential and aspirations, allowing them to reunite with society, grow and prepare to offer their very best. The Life Academy puts into action the Mayor’s compassion for those who struggle and the promise in her Inaugural Address to create a community where every person thrives. The Life Academy is a commitment to community uplift and reflects a dedicated investment that will reap generational dividends for these young women, their families, and their community.

16

Ensuring Political Support

Is there an upcoming election in your city? If so, please list the date of the election and if your current mayor is eligible for re-election and planning to run. Please note any other anticipated transitions in leadership. Should there be a leadership transition in your city, how will you ensure support through the transition?

The municipal election for the City of Pittsfield will be held Nov. 7, 2017. This year’s election is comprised of candidates seeking city councilor and school committee positions, as well as that of City Clerk. The mayor is not among the roster of candidates as she is two years into a four-year term which began January 2016. As mayoral leadership will remain intact for the next two years, the current administration expects to continue to work in collaboration with the City Council on initiatives that are essential to Pittsfield’s advancement and well-being. Additionally, the administration will extend the continuum of support around the Life Academy for Young Women by seeking the involvement of stakeholders in the community. The support by elected officials and community partners will serve as a strong foundation for the program’s long-term sustainability.

17

Engaging Your Community

How will you engage people, organizations, and resources inside and outside of the municipal government to sustain your idea over time?

As this initiative grows, so will the spectrum of partnerships. Engagement with the public sector will help to integrate a youth prevention agenda. Educational institutions will become more tightly knit to supporting youth towards successful adulthood by finding ways to use education to affect real-life problems. Youth service organizations will experience an organizing impulse to come together rather than seeing narrow turf issues. Citizens will find opportunities in this permeable ensemble of activities to contribute mentoring and social assets based on a strong understanding of a positive youth vision. The initiative will organize and magnify related efforts across the community.

18

Resident Reflections

Share your idea with stakeholders or residents who would be impacted by the idea. What are three of the most interesting responses?

Response 1

Emerging themes included programming designed around developing self-esteem, team building and learning basic life skills.

Response 2

Participants spoke about the need for those involved with their development to uphold high expectations and to assist them with problem-solving.

Response 3

Participants also wanted opportunities to explore interests and career options for their future.

19

Demand for Your Idea

How do you know this problem is relevant to other cities? Talk to at least two other cities that might be interested in taking up your idea once it's implemented. Do their responses provide any insights into what would make your idea more transferable?

The R.O.P.E. holistic approach has been widely embraced in the Berkshires and beyond. A significant number of cultural and higher education institutions, social service agencies, women and girl-focused organizations collaborate with R.O.P.E. Pittsfield Public schools and neighboring private and charter schools refer potential members. Limited resources including funds and transportation hinder the spread of R.O.P.E. in Berkshire County. We also have requests in Massachusetts, Bronx, N.Y., Eden, N.C. and Illovo, South Africa to replicate this program. Members have travelled to Ghana, West Africa and have collaborated with the girls of the Ghana Educational Collaborative Program, where portions of the group sessions and field trips have been implemented. South Africa's Mother of Peace Orphanage has also begun to design the foundation to meet the needs of their girls. Additionally, conversations, coaching, and sharing of information continue with partners in New York and North Carolina, as well.