Redcoat - MICRO (Spring 2019)

After reviewing your application, click the "Submit" button at either the top or bottom of the page.

Company Information

COMPANY DESCRIPTION

COMPANY STRUCTURE — Not Incorporated

INCORPORATION DATE (if applicable)

COUNTY — Wake

BUSINESS CATEGORY — Social Media

Please select any of the categories that apply to your company. — Social Enterprise

TARGET MARKET — Software & Computer Services

UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION — No University Relationship

If yes, please list the college or university below.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES — While Redcoat has not received any previous assistance, it has explored opportunities by working with a proto-client: Redcoat is inspired by the needs exhibited over past three years by the Data Scientist Society, a group for women pursuing careers in data science, which has 350+ members enrolled online and has monthly in-person meetings at various locations in Raleigh and Durham, N.C. While this group is unique — and any group is — it's needs to empower its community and members are not unique. Such community empowerment groups (CEGs) need to both collect and disseminate specialized data and leverage existing platforms.

PREVIOUS APPLICANT — ☐

PREVIOUS PROGRAM OR GRANT

COMPANY PROGRESS

Company Founders

Name	Email	Phone
Anna Smith	meanderingjasmine@gmail.com	252-289-7246

Team Details

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME TEAM MEMBERS (include founders)	0
NUMBER OF PART-TIME TEAM MEMBERS (include founders)	1
NUMBER OF CONTRACTORS	0
TEAM	The only active member is the company founder, Anna Smith. There are no full-time or part-time team members, as the company has no funding history. The daughter of farmers, Anna grew up in the rural south where church traditionally presented a periodic and structured way for dispersed neighbors to connect eye-to-eye. As an adult, her Lean-In Circle led her to an opportunity to develop the local chapter of a corporate employee affinity group, the Women's Information Network, at a regional bank. That opportunity was her first opportunity to design a CEG and a corresponding data model with the intention to leverage data, particularly network analysis, to grow the group, all in the context of a corporate role of in data science and application development. his involvement has been in addition to her career as a data scientist, in which she has successfully created model to protect banking clients from identity theft and measuring cybersecurity risk, leading to a safer world.
COMMITMENT	Redcoat has already invested hundreds of hours over the past three years (easily 20 hours per month) along with other volunteer's time, to design and implement CEG best practices, leading to deliberate, strategic design concepts for a prototype or minimum viable product which Redcoat wishes to develop.
ADVISORS	Redcoat has been occasionally advised by Jeffrey Ritter, a recognized expert in structuring trusted digital systems and Oxford lecturer living in Durham, North Carolina. It is also advised by Icimo of Cary, North Carolina, which is a data analytics firm offering services to businesses. Redcoat hopes that this grant application will further its journey in assembling advisors.

Business Details

PROBLEM	Traditional groups (women's circles, activist groups, benefit societies, support groups, guilds, neighborhood associations), functioning prior to the Internet age, have been overlooked as a target audience for web-based development. While each traditional group is likely small and potentially vapid, together these groups yet provide one of life's most gratifying sources of connection and benefits to society. They are challenging to cultivate, and modern technology could help if we are willing to meet the challenge. These traditional groups depend on identity, accountability, and commitment. However, humanity's experiment with the Internet thus far has hallowed anonymity, with no accountability or commitment required. As we are now seeing the dark sides of social media, it is time to use technology to serve traditional structures, allowing leaders to form them and re-form them easily and often, reducing any friction and hassle wherever possible, while elevating the transparent, identified, and committed individuals that we want to lead us.
SOLUTION	Before we describe our solution for community empowerment groups, first, recall Gitlab, the currently the de-facto sharing platform for software developers and other technical audiences. The Redcoat platform will be a an online platform for building consensus. Peter Hintjens has well-described successful online consensus-building platforms and their communities in his book Social Architecture. Drawing on those

architectural principles, our platform Redcoat will provide ways for traditional groups— probably not led by techno geeks— to execute traditional group tasks online: casting (organization design), attendance (identity and cooperation management), and structured communication.

Casting. In casting, a leader or a group of decision-makers make some routine decisions, such as name, meeting frequency and format. Our platform should go beyond anarchist voting up/down ideas. Our decision makers need to see and experience a more mature process, kin to Robert's Rules of Order, where ideas a virtually-formally proposed by a group member, supported by other group members, and a final decision made. The final decision becomes part of publicly-viewable website for the group, but the residue of the process is viewable by members only.

Attendance. Physical attendance at meeting is a true test of group commitment, and there are algorithms for granting committed, attending members more influence in decision-making. The key, however, is to make attendance recording and others data-gathering hassle-free.

Structured Communication. Successful groups must move beyond discussions on a discussion board: they need purpose-driven communication. Data submitted at sign-in surveys can be re-organized into a discrete newsletter that informs members of attribute statuses and changes, as well as presenting he current organizational calendar, and reporting on any group decisions (where the data was provided by the casting functionality).

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	In the past, all the processes above were achieved manually. So, there is no intellectual property at this point. Perhaps an advisor could explore the outlook for Redcoat's intellectual property.
VIDEO URL (OPTIONAL)	http://A video is available of our working exam...
CUSTOMER	The key customer is women who are ready for a wider circle of influence. Women's circles, such as abolitionist societies and temperance unions, have played influential roles in our history. More recently-founded groups exist (e.g., the Junior League), and about one hundred years ago, successfully achieved "bricks" status. Largely, these groups have aged out and not made the transformation to "clicks." However, the eye-to-eye of "bricks" is what makes a group gratifying to a women. Women know they need such groups because they need a place to practice leadership, consensus-building, and mutual supportiveness. It's widely understood that women comprise a smaller fraction of leadership than is supposed. According to a phenomenon known as the Matthew Effect, its only leaders who get leadership training. Women's participation in such groups allows the emergence of leaders which can then grown in their leadership skills. Anyone, however, who is motivated to make the world a better place through cooperation with others is a key customer. The following quote is often attributed to Margaret Meade: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Such an individual tends to show up at city council meetings to speak to the council as needs and concerns arise.
CUSTOMER DISCOVERY	Soon, the founder will be building skills in APIs and web scraping in the hopes to leverage data from Meetup.com (part competitor, part partner) to get an idea of how many meetup groups there are in the area. The platform could serve any geographic area, but to build the business, the local customer base needs to be built first.
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY	The business model is that the platform provides public view of high-level data released by the organization using the Redcoat platform (i.e., a website). This part of the platform is free to any organization and somewhat functions as a loss leader. However, the platform will recoup costs by charging a subscription fee to each individual using the platform for each organization. As group membership grows, because the platform delivers the value that helps grow memberships, the number of subscribing users to the platform grows.

Possibly, the app provides a pass-through for membership fees to the organization, allowing for larger transactions without excessive online-banking fees for each small transaction.

SELLING

The go-to-market strategy is adoption followed by referral, leading to more adoption and more referral. Redcoat can begin with the Data Scientista Society and Daughters of Dorothea Dix (in Raleigh, NC, once a core leadership group is found). Also, the founder is connected to other group founders, who know other related groups, because entire groups communicate with one another. As one group adopts the platform and is satisfied and benefited, it will suggest Redcoat as a common platform between them. Another key audience is the meetup group NC Data4Good, whose members want to offer their data science skills in service to greater good. This network may be willing to take Redcoat to groups they support. Another key audience is the North Carolina Community Foundation, which manages grants to non-profits in North Carolina (all non-profits need a fan base that can be supported by Redcoat).

COMPETITION

Many major platforms offer some group management functionality: LinkedIn, Meetup, and Facebook. These established platforms are already differentiated, and certainly, any group manager would want to leverage any widely-adopted platform; there's no stopping that. Rather, the strategy is to empathize with the group leader who must string together several pre-existing platforms for the total group membership experience.

The major groups platforms seem to take leadership for granted. They necessarily name a group admin, but that designation is within the context of their platform. Leadership does not just happen, in fact. People deliberately decide to start and grow a group.

Meetup is good for newly connecting people with a group. It is good for announcing meetings, and people signing up for meetings, and reminding about those RSVPs; it gets people in chairs. They survey capability is scant. A few, but not many, questions are permitted to a new enrollee (these aren't prompted for updating); certainly it does not hold robust data on a member. The meeting organizer must leverage his/her own contacts/resources to find a suitable meeting location.

LinkedIn offers firm identification, for those groups with a professional leaning. At least the user-contributed data on the member follows a usual resume-like structure. However, LinkedIn groups are virtual only. There is no functionality for conducting events.

In the case of the Data Scientista Society (DSS), the group has a Meetup site for announcing meetings. Members provide a LinkedIn profile when they join the group, a deliberate configuration by the choice of DSS. DSS needs a LinkedIn app which will allow LinkedIn profile data to be downloaded. Were this to happen the downloaded data would then be analyzed for key member attributes. The member attribute data would need to be stored elsewhere. When DSS needs to survey members, it uses a survey platform such as Google survey. In those surveys, members identify themselves with a LinkedIn profile URL. As LinkedIn is providing identity management, and Meetup is providing meeting management, both platforms are essential to the group, but neither, nor both, is enough.

The key shortfall with the competition, particularly Meetup, is that there is no way for a group leaders to track members attributes and their changes. Community empowerment groups exists to get groups members from some Point A to some Point B of more power. A group leader needs to see who is where, and possibly leverage prediction, to discover the mediators that lead to success. This is what support groups do. We should call them success groups.

TRACTION

This grant application is the second action of the company, the first being the Momentum program. So, there is no company history to recount at this time.

REVENUE	No
EXPECTED REVENUE	9
Total Revenue Generated To-Date Over the Life of the Company	$0.00
Time Period of Total Revenue (in months)	0
Last 12 Months Gross Revenue	$0.00

Other Funding & Impact

FOUNDER(S) CONTRIBUTION	$13,000.00
GRANTS	$0.00
LOANS	$0.00
GIFTS	$0.00
AWARDS/PRIZE MONEY	$0.00
OTHER FUNDING	$0.00
PAST FUNDING DETAIL	The outlay so far has been using the Momentum Learn immersive program to educate the founder on modern web development and software development. The cost of that program is $13,000.
IMPACT	With a minimum viable product of the two modules, our milestone groups can begin to test the platform, and we can begin demonstrating it to other groups, to being the adoption-referral cycle. If the grant is not awarded, the development of the platform will continue on a slow, volunteer timeframe, but it will continue.

Grant Request

GRANT AMOUNT REQUESTED (max. $10,000)	$10,000.00
USE OF FUNDS	The funds will be used to secure the development of a minimum viable platform. Redcoat will explore using ThoughtBot as a partner. Some funds should be used for basic legal work to create the business formally, legally.
MILESTONES	The milestones are (1) the launch and use of an automated attendance and newsletter module (using the Data Scientista Society as the target client) and (2) the launch of the Daughters of Dorothea Dix, after a select group of women have made decisions using the consensus-building module. The long-term goal is to have 1/2 million app instances in use in Triangle region of North Carolina within a few years.

Final Information

CONFLICT OF INTEREST	I don't know any of the names on the list.
LIABILITY WAIVER & INFORMATION DISCLOSURE	Anna Marie Kirkland Smith
Was this your first time hearing about NC IDEA?	Yes
How did you initially hear about this particular application opportunity?	Entrepreneurial Support Organization Referral
Please provide more detail regarding your selection above (i.e., specific name of media outlet, social network or referring organization/individual). (max characters: 2,000)	American Underground

Reviews

APPLICANT FEEDBACK	APPLICATION STAGE
It's great that you have thought of a solution to help solve some of the issues you've seen in your own life and groups you're a member of. However, I'm unclear the exact problem you're trying to solve. I encourage you to go in person to speak with the leadership of these groups to drill down the issues they face so you can be more specific. I also think you might be a good fit for NC IDEA LABS to help you through the customer discovery process.	Application
Redcoat's goal, as I understand it, is to provide a platform for group decision making and management through a mobile app. This is a product with a potentially large audience and large competitors. You make the argument that large competitors -- like LinkedIn and Meetup and SurveyMonkey -- provide only pieces of a solution rather than the integrated app that organizations like the Data Scientista Society need. On the one hand, I find this to be a compelling need in the sense that available communication tools are almost always imperfectly suited to the specific needs of specific groups. But I think the fragmentation of group management tools is a product of the difficulty of creating a one-size-fits-all solution. It seems to me that each feature you mention -- attendance keeping, newsletter management, and consensus-building -- would be a complex software challenge by itself, especially in the context of a mobile application. I think the explanation of your proposed solution would benefit from the use of more concrete feature examples. Your proposal would benefit from specifically describing, for example, how the feature set differs from MeetUp. My other main concern is that there is no realistic estimate of the cost or time required to build a complex software platform like the one you are proposing. Software development, especially outsourced to a company like Thoughtbot, would be very, very expensive. Finally -- and this is a minor point -- I think future applications would benefit from a bit more careful proofreading and editing.

From your position as someone who is actively engaged in helping manage groups, I think you have a keen sense of some of the problems that need to be solved. I hope you continue to develop your outline of a solution. | Application |