

One Step to a LEAP (Literacy, Equity, And Play) - Proposal Concept Note for GRANT/AWARD

Eligibility Criteria and Basic Information

Project Title	One Step to a LEAP: (Literacy, Equity, And Play) plus Climate Action
Purpose	One Step Learning will promote, deliver, and sustain Early Childhood Learning and Innovation for children aged 1 – 6 years in rural Ghana town, Entumbil, especially to empower rural town Girls and Women parents
Organization	<i>One Step Learning Opportunities Centre</i> (OSL) – a CRA registered Charity BN 771608478RR0001 & SMO with < \$200,000 annual revenue/expenses
GH Local Org	First Light Daycare Parents Association - Entumbil, Ghana. (ANNEX 1)
Innovation and Climate Action / SDG	Using nature and space around daycare for Childrens Learning Garden and Playground that supports outdoor and indoor learning and literacy for girls and boys whilst empowering mostly Women parents and girls 1–6-year-olds
Duration	10 months (based on 2024 – 2026 OSL Strategic Framework for Literacy)
Testing Phase	Daycare opened in October 2021, in the Global South context, the project is still in the testing phase as there is no Ghana Government funds involved for rural daycares. Presently OSL is funded by Canadian pensioners' Private Foundation with depleted cash funds besides the building and land. In this rural town, it is normal for testing projects to take 5 years or more.
Equipment for Learning and literacy	The Water Tanks and Playground equipment for learning have already been donated and/or confirmed by Rotary Clubs and Emmanuel Foundation. Water Tanks already in Ghana. Playground equipment needs to be shipped
Country and Sector Testing	Ghana Early Childhood Learning and Literacy. Education and Climate Action/SDG Empower girls' education and women (Gender Equality- to Empower Women & Girls) to use the Nature world around them for literacy
GRANT/AWARD	\$ Open
OSL & Others contribution	\$ Open
Contact	John Hagan, President, Tel: 780-717-4055, Email: john@onesteplearning.org
Signatories	John Hagan and Celestina Hagan, Co-founders of OSL
Revenue	Daily attendance fees of \$0.35/per child covers 20% of operating costs
Collaborators & Supporters	Supporters & Collaborators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotary Clubs (Donor), • Emmanuel Foundation (Donor), • Ghana Friendship Association Edmonton (Donor), • Africa Centre (Intermediary Funder - Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative) • Post-secondary institutions as non-monetary collaborators under negotiation and networking radar in progress. .

Background/Context

Entumbil is an impoverished farming community in Ghana. The community has a female majority (53.3% females, 46.7% males), however rates of literacy and education trail behind their male counterparts. The Ghana Statistical 2010 Population Census District Analytical Report¹ <https://new-ndpc-static1.s3.amazonaws.com/CACHES/PUBLICATIONS/2016/06/06/AJUMAKO+ENYAN+-+ESIAM.pdf> states that “among the male population aged three years and older, 12.5% have

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never attended school”, while “among the female population 26.9% never attended school”. This points to a disparity in educational and eventual vocational/employment opportunities for women in the district.

The challenge is rural children have potential, but rural towns like Entumbil lack the means and infrastructure to elevate children’s talents and abilities to acquire lifelong learning skills. UNICEF Ghana states “Many girls do not have the chance to get an education mainly because of poverty, gender and long distances to school.” [[www.unicef.org>Ghana>girls education/Early childhood education UNICEF/UNI123643](http://www.unicef.org/Ghana>girls%20education/Early%20childhood%20education%20UNICEF/UNI123643)]

Entumbil offers a natural environment awaiting an opportunity for learning (i.e. **LEAP**). This opportunity arrived on 18 October 2021, when One Step Learning (OSL) launched a preschool daycare facility for 1 – 6-year-olds. As grassroots Ghanaian Canadians, OSL founders took the first step by donating to the community a building and land for 30 years rent-free designated for early childhood learning. An innovative children’s garden has started as Climate Action and Social Developmental Goals (SDG), using the world around the town to sustain environment, feed the children and to integrate children within the agricultural heritage of their communities.

The facility and launch of operations are first testing steps towards removing barriers to education and efforts to bridge the literacy gap. Canada’s Feminist International Assistance (CFIA) Policy states “eliminating barriers to equality and helping to create better opportunities, women and girls can be powerful agents of change...This is a powerful way to reduce poverty for everyone”.

Innovative Solution

What:

OSL is advancing early childhood literacy by establishing a Learning-Through-Play daycare, an innovative approach to gender equality challenges using the nature world around rural Entumbil.

To support sustainable operations, charity charges an affordable daily attendance fee of \$0.35 to accommodate the impoverished community, especially women parents and to empower them to seek vocation and employment. The token charge covers only 20% of operation costs.

The innovative initiation of OSL in Entumbil is a direct result of the founders’ charitable donation of a large, fenced compound building for the daycare and registration of a charitable organization in Canada to manage the daycare’s affairs. The compound has enough nature to take Climate Action and SDG. Secondly, as beneGrant/Award to Canadians, OSL offers a learning centre of excellence to Canadian institutions. The facility will host placements for students’ practicum and research, virtually and in-person, to gain valuable international and culturally responsive teaching experience. This secondary beneGrant/Award to Canadian institutions is a visionary foresight.

Impact

In the third year of testing, OSL boasts a total enrollment of 183 students. 84 (46%) are girls, whose parents can now pursue gainful employment or careers. The average 80 children of the 183 enrolled who can afford the daily \$0.35 and attend daycare daily, 46% are girls and 54% are boys. 11 (77%) of the 14 jobs created by OSL in Entumbil are occupied by women. OSL has

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had huge increase in registrations beyond its original planned daycare population of 32. We started with 11 children in October 2021, now we serve 80 children daily since 2022. Yes, the facility can accommodate 100-120 children, but our resources can only handle 80 children now.

OSL's goals align with Canada's international assistance priority objective of innovation in international assistance by enabling a locally driven solution to address the development challenge of disparity in female and male early literacy and education rates. The OSL model aligns with Canada's international assistance priority objective to empower children, especially girls, to advance literacy, prosperity, and gender equality in the community. Receipt of GRANT/AWARD funding for OSL would enhance this locally adopted, testing solution to make it effective and efficient, while supporting the Policy's aim to "scaling up of new solutions to development challenges".

Outcomes:

- Rural children, particularly girls, get the opportunity to learn through play, be happy, healthy, safe, and become lifelong learners of tomorrow. It is life changing experience.
- Affected children's parents, mostly women, get a chance to pursue gainful employment.
- Employment is created in the Entumbil community for teachers and support staff.
- Canadian students expand their educator practice through practicum placements, learning skills to deliver culturally responsive education.
- Private grassroots citizens like OSL founders, embrace and support the CFIA Policy which "recognizes that supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the best way...to close gender gaps...".
- Reduced disparity in literacy and education rates between females and males
- Program projects are tangible, visible, verifiable, and sustainable.

Who:

OSL, is a Canadian registered charity in Edmonton Alberta. OSL is a member of Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC), a member of the Inter-Council Network. Canadians and Canadian institutions who are interested to reach out and help will also be engaged and become beneficiaries. The local organization, First Light Daycare Parents Association, assists with the operation of the facility. Families of preschool aged children will be the beneficiaries of the OSL activities. When the girls and children are safely cared for at OSL, women are empowered to seek careers and employment.

UNICEF [www.unicef.org>Ghana>girls education/Early childhood education 123643] states that "By providing all young children between 0 to 8 years, equal access to quality health, nutrition, protection, early learning services, support to parents and caregivers ..., we build a strong foundation for a child's life." The Entumbil community fully supports the initiative and has readily volunteered some \$10,000 in services. The town representatives and parents have formed the Entumbil Daycare Parents Association to assist running the daycare that is recognized and registered at the Municipal and Department of Social Welfare offices.

Where:

The Head Office of OSL charity is in Edmonton Alberta Canada. The daycare facility for OSL purposes is located in Entumbil, Ghana and it is run by OSL Ghanaian employees without intermediaries. Ghana Statistics Report describes "Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District is one of the

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twenty (20) districts in Central Region of Ghana”. Entumbil is a rural community with some 12 other towns within a 10km radius. The surrounding towns’ citizens also attend OSL in Entumbil despite transportation challenges. More want to attend if transportation challenges solved.

When:

The daycare program project opened on October 18, 2021, and it is in the testing phase. The funds requested are to purchase a used school van/bus, to pay for ten (10) months operations, including wages, educational materials, daycare operations and maintenance and freight. Funds will also be applied to the Climate Action and SDG Children’s garden upkeep. The water tanks and playground equipment have already been donated/committed by Rotary and Emmanuel Foundation and GRANT/AWARD funds will not be used for those. A presentation of OSL Strategic Framework for 2024 – 2026 is attached/submitted.

The OSL progression and data analysis since October 2021 to date is detailed in the Early Literacy Strategy Framework Generosity Shines document. Positive momentum has been generated during the short testing period and that needs to be continued with supporting funds from GRANT/AWARD and other avenues. OSL founders are pensioners who stepped up to help and donated their building rent-free and set up a charity for perpetuity. It is time to undertake innovative improvement projects and diversify revenue sources for sustainability.

Why:

UNICEF’s Early Childhood Development (ECD) program in Ghana² was established following UNICEF’s identification that “43 per cent of children less than five years old are not achieving their full potential. This could be because they do not receive the five elements of ‘nurturing care’ for children”. UNICEF identifies these elements as health, nutrition, early stimulation, learning opportunities and protection. The Entumbil daycare provides all of the five elements.

OSL agrees strongly with the philosophies of the proven UNICEF ECD program and seeks to provide children with the “elements of nurturing care for children” through its innovative integrated curriculum in the Learning-Through-Play approach of early childhood education. OSL anticipates this will be successful in rural Entumbil as children will have opportunity to apply lessons learned at daycare to assisting parents in home life and the world around them. UNICEF’s experience is that exposure to early childhood education and access to the “elements of nurturing care for children” will help to drive continued learning.

How:

To accommodate affordability for the predominantly lower income families, OSL charges:

- one-time registration fee of GHC20 (twenty Ghana cedis, i.e., \$3 CAD or \$2 USD),
- daily attendance fee of GHC4 (four Ghana cedis, i.e., \$0.35 CAD or \$0.20 cents USD).

These fees only cover feeding for the children and sanitation supplies, approximately 20% of operations. Until maturity in eight years or more, the projected monthly staff salaries and operating expenses of \$4,500 can only be provided through voluntary donations and contributions by willing sponsors and partners with GRANT/AWARD. The OSL goals align with Canada’s Gender Equality objectives and GRANT/AWARD priorities. OSL founders in addition to donating an evaluated \$241,000 rent-free building for the daycare, have contributed some

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\$55,000 the last three years as evidenced in its 2023 Financial Statements. GRANT/AWARD funding will complete the 2024-2025 operations, garden and playground projects to pay for.

Financials (See template or website – www.onesteplearning.org)

People / Organization Capacity (ANNEX 1)

OSL is a member of ACGC part of the Inter-Council Networks and has participated in many of their webinars and development courses. OSL has hired competent local employees, predominantly female, to run the daycare without using intermediaries. The daycare principal is a Bachelor of Education graduate with specialization in social work and disabilities. Assistant Head, and Computer Administrator are university graduates in education and business. The rest are: four qualified teaching attendants, two nannies, two matrons and sanitation, one Gardner, and two security personnel. A school bus is needed to transport those 20% of the daily attendance children who travel some 5-10 km or more to the daycare. The Playground sponsored by Rotary and Emmanuel Foundation will facilitate Learning-Through Play theme.

OSL is a Canadian charity, Canada Revenue Agency, Alberta Provincial Government, and similar Ghana authorities. OSL is certified by Ghana Department of Social Welfare as a Category "A" Daycare, the highest grading available. OSL is also registered as a Community Based Organization (CBO and Non-Profit Organization) operating in Entumbil, Central Region, under Ajumako+Enyan+Essiam District Assembly, Ghana.

The Board is headed by John Hagan, President, who is a chartered professional accountant and a professional certified internal auditor. John has over 30 years work experience in Canada and seven years in Ghana. John is co-founder of OSL. He is a CPA Financial Literacy Volunteer. He is also a big-time volunteer for various organizations in the Edmonton community.

Celestina Hagan, also a co-founder, has worked in hospital services for over 20 years in Canada. Prior, she worked in Ghana for ten years as dressmaker and coach.

The couple has business acumen and valuable experience in children's advocate experience for over 25 years and volunteering. The Accountability Monitors and Organization Chart in the Strategy Framework document speaks to integrity.

Other – The Climate Action and SDG (ANNEX 1)

A key learning strategy using the world around the children is that OSL is testing a huge Learning Garden on the compound for education. We emphasize creative development relying on the resources available within our rural environment. The Fruit and Vegetables Learning Garden is a stone throw away at the back of the building. Everyday the children and visitors can see from their activity classroom windows fruits and vegetables that generate questions, curiosity, conversation, and learning. Lots of topics and activities are learned from a well-maintained garden. GRANT/AWARD support for this Climate Action and SDG initiative will go a long way to OSL's desire to preserve the environment while learning. The elements in the garden facilitate teaching OSL play-based curriculum of: Language, numbers, colours, shapes, hygiene, alphabets, arithmetic, mathematics, science, integration, music, nutrition, health, people, nature, drawings, imagination, manners, life skills, the world around us, community values, education, culture, sharing, roles, and creativity. The local Daycare Parents Association,

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consist of 85% women empowered to make this testing project become sustainable and successful.

Risk Management & Mitigation	Performance Measure/ Evaluations
Community and elders buy-in is present	Milestones and scheduled goals tracked.
Local Competent and Qualified staff hired.	Enrollments, attendance, graduations climb.
Volunteers (FLDPA) are readily available Founders and Directors have experience. Reaching out for GRANT/AWARD funding and others Buy relevant software applications	Facilities improvement with equipment. Maintain the Category A Ghana DSW rating. Periodic external agency inspections. Directors' periodic hands-on inspection visits
Materials and services to purchase are visible for inspection in Canada and Entumbil	Learning Garden's growth and status regularly monitored and visible.
Parent, Staff and Volunteer Policies, and Handbooks exist for guidance. Other formal agreements/documents exist	Parents surveys. Focus Groups. Town/Community surveys

References

1. Ghana Statistical Service (2013). 2010 Population and Housing Census; Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District; District Analytical report. Ghana Statistical Service, Accra.
2. <https://www.unicef.org/ghana/early-childhood-development>

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ANNEX 1: Pictures of donated Building. Projects are tangible, visible, verifiable & sustainable.



After some two years of conversion founders and stakeholders are happy the dream is realized



Innovation Strategy uses world around OSL - Kids Learning Garden for Climate Action & SDG.



First Light Daycare Parents Association is a full participant. Daycare opened October 2021.



Girls and Boys get a chance to Learn through Play and become Literates for life