



Grant Proposal:

Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship (EWTE)

Christine McCarthy Chavez, Krista Rundiks, PhuongAnh McDevitt

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Professor David R. Gomez, Ph D

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 APPLICATION COVER SHEET

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1. Narrative

a. Project Goal:

Our goal is to provide an experienced team of professionals to support and empower up to 20 women in Morocco as individuals and as a collective group by creating a 3-year eLearning certified program which will implement a culturally inclusive curriculum. The Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship (EWTE) eLearning program will teach women best practices in global business and e-commerce strategies, promotes leadership and group collaboration through latest Information Communication and Technology (ICT) within a culturally inclusive instructional design (ID) framework, focuses on business sustainability while promoting community contribution and opportunities for local reciprocity, and seeks to provide economic growth opportunities for the participating women, their families, and surrounding communities.

b. Project Objectives:

Objective 1: To Promote and Support Women's Business & Entrepreneurship via eLearning Technologies

To initiate the EWTE program, a learner analysis will be conducted. The analysis will cover a list of questions to help identify student demographic and learning preference data (Gunawardena, Frechette, & Layne, 2019). When starting this project, we will hold a week long introduction summit in three of Morocco's major cities, these being Casablanca (population 3.8 million), Rabat (population 1.4 million), and Marrakech (population 907,000) (York, 2017). These central locations will also accommodate women who live in the surrounding municipalities. A face-to-face meeting allows students to obtain their ICT devices in person while providing initial hands on training

with hardware and software. The summit's initiative is to reinforce technology adoption and ICT acceptance in the early stages of the program. This introduction will provide an opportunity for the participating women to get acquainted with their peer network, co-mentors, online facilitators, IT support professionals, and will train students on how to utilize the eLearning support system.

Objective 2: Implement a Collaborative Approach Through WisCom Framework:

After the introductory conference, most of the program will be online and utilize a collaborative and socio-cultural ID approach. We will do this through implementing a Wisdom Communities (WisCom) ID framework. The WisCom framework developed by Gunawardena, Frechette, and Layne incorporates 7 fundamental components, these are building a wisdom community, collaborative inquiry cycle (CIC), technology, communication, distributed co-mentoring, learner support, and transformative learning (Gunawardena et al., 2019). In the beginning of the eLearning journey, the women will define wisdom as a collective group. After this they will be assigned projects that provide situated learning examples where they will utilize the CIC which involves research, writing, discussion, reflection, synthesis of information, and a summary of their learning (Gunawardena et al., 2019).

Objective 3: Develop an Instructional Design to Meet the Cultural Needs of Moroccan Women

When developing and deploying the EWTE eLearning program, we have kept in mind that Morocco is a country rich with diverse culture. The women in this group are from a predominantly collectivist society and may value holistic thinking, extended family, cooperation, and religion as a part of daily culture (Al-Harhi, 2016). It is likely the

women may personally resonate with more of a feminine vs. masculine culture where excellence is something one keeps to themselves (Al-Harhi, 2016). Through their willingness to learn and create empowerment in their lives combined with the learner support and distributed co-mentoring the program will provide, we are confident the women will be proud to excel and embrace a path for life-long learning.

The EWTE eLearning program will incorporate 12 courses over the span of 3 years. We see the need for content to be disseminated primarily in French instead of Arabic to adhere to global commerce, economics, diplomacy, and international issues (York, 2017).

The eLearning platform will be an open-source Learning Management System (LMS) such as, Moodle and/or WordPress that will be designed, hosted, and maintained by local ICT professionals. The LMS will utilize a responsive design, meaning it will be accessible from a laptop, tablet, and smartphone and will deliver course materials available in different file formats, will include streaming video and audio tutorials, a class resources section, a discussion forum, web conferencing, file uploading, sharing capabilities, live chat, course messages, a journal for self-reflection, and a section for evaluation and assessment for both students and instructor. The LMS will adhere to the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as well as adhere to ADA compliance for the benefit of all users (Siteimprove, n.d.).

Objective 4: Promote Women's Empowerment Through ICT Resources and Technology in Morocco

With considerable ICT growth in the local workforce provided by Microsoft who developed an ICT Academy and Certification program in 2014 (UMCI News, 2014) and Huawei's most recent 2019 ICT Academy launch (Morocco World News, 2019)

combined with well over 12.393 million mobile users and 4.6 million internet users (Hamdy, 2007), we feel eLearning will be a viable solution for women's empowerment in the region. Given the upward rise in ICT investments the use of a 2-in-1 laptop convertible tablet and smartphone with internet access is appropriate for the area as there is easy access to established 3G and 4G networks with current developments underway for a 5G network provided by Moroccan communications company Inwi and Chinese company Huawei (York, 2017; TeleGeography, 2019). Service providers such as ISPs, cybercafes, and mobile phone companies are plentiful through the cities and don't create any outstanding economic, legal, or regularity obstacles (York, 2017).

Objective 5: Strive for Future Sustainability through Community Collaboration

During the 3-year EWTE curricula the women will partake in situated learning examples that are structured around real-world problems and build a community of practice (CoP) that will offer a network of support inside the classroom via peer-to-peer communications and within the local community through establishing trusted relations with regional merchants and business enterprises (Gunawardena et al., 2019).

2. Innovation and Approach

a. Overview

The Moroccan women are part of communities stemming from different generations. The women benefitting from this program will be encouraged to seek out those who have a rare mix of skills and values: humility, inclusiveness, kindness, generosity, and reflectiveness within their community to learn from (Gunawardena et al., 2019).

b. Co-Mentoring and Collaborative Learning Through WisCom Components

Co-mentoring will be incorporated to build on the formation and sustention of a culturally inclusive community by encouraging individuals to support one another (Bona, Rinehart, & Volbrecht, 1995). Co-mentoring emerges within collaborative learning; both concepts reflect a social, participatory approach to interaction that reflects participants' diverse backgrounds, talents, and learning preferences.

c. How the Proposed Work Will be Accomplished

Women will be taught to create a business plan to help promote their goods. This plan will include establishing business relationships with banks and raw material businesses. Part of the education process for the women will include establishing partnerships from local colleges and community centers. Having community partners will increase the visibility for all parties by promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth among the local communities. Continuing education will be on-going as technology changes.

d. Functions and Activities Identified

Pros: Women of Morocco selected for this program will be participating in classes that strengthen skills related to communication, technology, entrepreneurship, marketing and start-up management. They will also learn cloud-based software so they can access programs anywhere. With these new skills women will be boosting the productivity and competitiveness of women entrepreneurs in Morocco, hence accelerating the region's economic growth. Through these activities the women will learn eLearning technologies and applications and how to work collaboratively in business.

Cons: The primary challenges will be learning new technologies, technology adoption, accessibility, and culture and gender roles.

In Morocco, the rate of female labour force participation is one of the highest in the Arab world (27.1% in 2016), with an increasing number of female-headed households (16.2 %), and of wives as primary breadwinners in the absence of a good-paying or regular job for the husband. (Meryem, 2018, p. 131)

Even though woman tend to be working outside the home more they are still expected to take care of the domestic responsibilities such as, childcare and household chores.

Learning new technology will require additional time for studying and practicing. Family obligations may take time away from doing this. eLearning may occur in the evening and considerations will be made for women who may lack internet services where they live.

Women who struggle learning computer literacy may require additional support from a facilitator or translation assistant to help decipher certain terms. Some of the women may live long distances from a brick and mortar learning facility. Transportation including bus routes and ride sharing may need to be coordinated.

e. Design and Technological Innovations

One of the most exciting aspects of technology in education is that it is used to enhance creativity. ICT usage is essential for the emergence of the knowledge society and can actively contribute to human development, improvement of social cohesion and national economic growth.

f. ICT Enhances the Learning Experience

ICT fosters the learning environment and enhances the learning experience. The usage of ICT also improves the student's potentials as it enables collaborative development of skills and capacities to create knowledge. In addition, it sets the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development because among other things it also advances the

digital and technical competences that are needed for employment, education, and self-development.

g. ICT Formats and Platform

Women will be using a variety of multimedia formats such as written text, digital photography, and video that can be created on their 2-in-1 laptop convertible tablet and smartphone. Instructional designers, course facilitator/instructors, and students will be using an LMS that has an intuitive and user-friendly interface and is a tool for working collaboratively.

h. eLearning Technologies to Support Collaborative Learning Strategies

Research has shown that 'collaborative' learning strategies and opportunities can improve learner engagement and learning outcomes. These studies propose that setting up asynchronous computer mediated discussions as one component of course assessments is a natural mechanism to encourage 'collaborative' learning (Naciri, n.d.). The importance of the 'social' element of learning in these environments is substantial.

3. Results and Benefits

a. Reductions in Cost and Time

The proposed innovated eLearning is in partnership with local businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and with ICT companies. These partnerships will facilitate training on social networking and motivation to pursue utilization of social networking to meet the entrepreneurship needs. There are two phases of training. The first phase will focus on training the Moroccan staff and volunteer trainers at various community education centers (CECs) (Hanemann & Scarpino, 2016).

The second phase is for the trained Moroccan personnel to train/mentor the participants at these centers. The second phase will also comprise of pre-vocational training sessions relating to the professions desired by the participants and according to the economic opportunities available in each region (i.e. agriculture, livestock-rearing, basket weaving, bee-keeping, tapestry-making, etc.). Strategical training and planning will reduce cost and time.

b. Efficient Use of Application of eLearning Technologies

Streamlining business products to be sold on the internet involves information collection, pricing, web presentations, and processing orders. This progress is assisted by a trained local assistant. Information collection includes photographing, measuring, and weighing of the products. Using the information above, a description of the product and a life story of the woman (if she chooses) who makes the product is attached along with the price. Orders are received by email and the local assistant will verify if the item is available. The clients are informed via email of the availabilities of the items and they can pay electronically. The local assistant will update the web pages as items are sold. Communities' involvement will lead to transfer of skills and empowerment as part of local capacity-building efforts to support the creation and development of economic opportunities for the Moroccan women and the vulnerable groups. Thus, a reflection of the nature of the Moroccan society, which is a society of true solidarity in which collective work and mutual aid are ancestral values (Ibourk & Amaghous, 2014).

c. Social and Community Involvement

As mentioned earlier, EWTE will employ local ICT professionals, translators, and facilitators to maintain a level of success throughout the 3-year duration. EWTE program

understands the importance of utilizing local and regional resources, services, and products to create sustainable business relationships. Our goal is to not only empower the women enrolled, but to empower women in the southern part of Morocco where there is much less access to ICT infrastructure and technology resources, education opportunities are less abundant, and literacy standards are below average. As part of a situated learned example, an engaging the local community project, and developing a product, the women in the class will be able to bring to market goods crafted by local artisans in the southern region such as rugs made by women weavers in the Atlas mountains (Davis, 2007).

d. Quantitative Quarterly Projections of Accomplishments

Quarterly Task Projections: Task/Deliverable	Year	Months				
		Jan	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
Administrative Production						
Conduct Learner Analysis	2020					
Set-up LMS	2020					
Set-up Facilitators in Morocco	2020					
Student Enrollment	2020					
eLearning Summit	2020					
Introductions	2020					
Provide Hardware / Software	2020					
Understand Learner Support System	2020					
Classes 1-4	2020					
Building a Wisdom Community	2020					
Establishing a CoP	2020					
Technology Acceptance	2020					
Using the CIC	2020					
Course Evaluation and Feedback	2020					
Classes 5-8	2021					
Developing a Business Plan	2021					
Situated Learning Example	2021					
Engaging the Local Community	2021					
Developing a Product from Concept to Completion	2021					
Product Testing	2021					
Course Evaluation and Feedback	2021					
Classes 9-12	2022					
Marketing a Product and Business	2022					
eCommerce for Global Business	2022					
Local Business Strategies	2022					
Business Sustainability	2022					
Final Evaluations & Assessments	2022					
Graduation Ceremony	2022					
Receive Certification	2022					

4. Organizational Capacity and Partners

a. The University of New Mexico (UNM)

UNM along with its resources are well suited to apply for this grant to support and promote women's business in Morocco through international commerce via eLearning technologies. In implementing eLearning technologies our objectives are to promote group collaboration through the WisCom framework, instructional design to meet the cultural needs of Moroccan women, integration of local businesses and NGOs, and partnership with Huawei and Microsoft for ICT resources. The goal is for the Moroccan women to thrive and sustain entrepreneurial business after three years of this proposal.

b. Instructional Designer (ID)

The ID will be responsible for identifying, developing, and implementing learning solutions that encourages professional growth of the participants. He/she will develop learning and support solutions to enable course effectiveness. The ID will manage the creation of learning solutions and design courses to meet the objectives set forth by SMEs and EWTE. The ID personnel will ensure that the training programs are developed in a manner that maximizes efficiency and stimulates the transfer of knowledge to learners in a creative format while achieving desired target metrics.

c. Internet Service Provider (ISP)

AT&T is the most common wired and wireless internet option in Morocco and will be the internet service provider. AT&T will provide internet service to the CECs throughout the northern part of the country with major cities being Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, and surrounding rural areas. In addition to internet services, Huawei, one of the world's leading ICT providers, will support equipment and software for training of community

volunteers, ID and IT personnel.

d. Information Technology (IT)

A technologist will design, operate or maintain technology products and services related to software, hardware, databases, web resources, and networks. The duties of the personnel include network management, software development and database administration in accordance with the goal of the project. He/she will determine the practicality of changes and modification of systems and stay up-to-date on emerging technologies and the potential effectiveness of these advancements.

e. Subject Matter Expert (SME)

An appointed expert in ICT and culturally inclusive ID from UNM will work closely with the trained local SMEs. He/she will monitor participants' perceptions of the workshops' effectiveness and satisfaction with eLearning, participants' interactions and communication with their trainers/mentors at different centers, community of practice over time as a result of training and experience. SMEs will ensure the maximum use of existing resources in workshop activities.

5. How We Will Work Together with Local and Regional Partners

a. Overview

Morocco is known for being one of the most progressive states in the Middle East with growing innovations found in its northern urban cities such as, Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech and because of its advancements made for women. Despite these advancements, women's education in Morocco is still lagging behind. There is a large gap between the urban and rural areas of Morocco. Almost 90 percent of women in rural

areas are illiterate. These numbers are largely due to the cultural norms in rural areas, where traditional gender roles are still prevalent. (Borgen, 2017)

b. Partnering with Local Universities

Morocco has 17 public universities and collaborating with the universities will provide positive community involvement while providing professional classrooms to establish collaborative teamwork between women and facilitators. It is envisioned that the activities launched through this collaborative project will continue to operate and expand for other women's groups throughout Morocco.

c. Women Graduates Mentor Future Entrepreneurs

The Moroccan women's graduating groups will potentially create an online forum to continue sharing their experiences and provide peer-to-peer business mentoring for future women who want to expand their eLearning experience. The graduating class will help expand the learning process by participating in activities such as workshops, peer training, and community gatherings to share their experiences.

d. Sensitivity to Regional Operating Environments

Considerations of the region include the integrity of water sources including water shortages, tools to either produce or create goods and transportation to community centers/universities. Women will be encouraged to seek out business partners from other local business in their community including farmers to help sustain the agriculture. Depending on the parts of the state where the women are from, internet connections will also have to be taken into consideration for at home studies. The goal is to recruit women from all economic backgrounds so that they can achieve financial independence and help support their family households with additional income.

6. Budget and Budget Justification

Item	Description	Cost per Unit	Quantity	Total Cost over 3 years
2-in-1 laptop convertible tablet: Surface Pro 6	Ultra-slim and versatile. Stay productive in style with Surface Pro 6 + Type Cover — now with the latest 8th Gen Intel® Core™ processor	\$1,329.00	20	\$26,580.00 (total cost for 20 units)
Smartphone: Huawei P20 Pro	4G LTE, Dual SIM, Unlocked, 128 GB Storage, Android	\$595.00	20	\$11,900.00 (total cost for 20 units)
Hardware Replacement	Insurance plan for devices if lost or stolen.	\$300.00/3 year accident protection plan	40	\$12,000.00
AT&T (internet provider)	Provide internet service to CECs in major cities and rural areas	\$50/month x 40 devices	\$2,000/year	\$6,000.00
Information Technology / Design Personnel (3)	Design, operate or maintain technology and services related software, hardware, databases, and networks	\$30/hour	3 x \$187,200.00/year	\$561,600.00
Instructional Design Personnel (2)	Identify, develop and implement learning solutions to ensure effective professional development	\$35/hour	2 x \$145,600.00/year	\$436,800.00
Subject Matter Expert (4)	Includes instructors, trainers, and facilitators to monitor and evaluate programs	\$45/hour	4 x \$187,200.00/year	\$748,800.00
CECs	Renting of CECs for quarterly trainings and meetings	\$150.00	12 meetings x 3 years	\$5,400.00
Training Supplies	Notepads, pens, papers, workbooks, etc.	\$75.00/meeting or training session	\$75 x 12 meetings x 3 years	\$2,700.00

Incidentals	Additional costs for ICT, transportation, facility use, facilitators and instructional designers, etc.			\$188,220.00
Total Budget				\$2,000,000.00

7. Conclusion

The EWTE eLearning program is respectfully seeking \$2,000,000 to support the cost of technology supplies, employment for facilitators and mentors and classroom space to provide eLearning education. With the eLearning plan the women in Morocco will have an opportunity to find individual empowerment while gaining confidence and pride in the work they do not only for themselves, but for their families and communities in which they live and support. This program is the stepping stone for future generations. We hope the effects of promoting the women in Morocco will be felt around the world.

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