



## **DigiEduHack Solution**

### **Aalto Main Event - Making ICT education accessible for all**

#### **Challenge: Help us find tools for making ICT education accessible for adult learners**

## **The Long Way**

### **The Long Way - Towards a Skillful, Inclusive and Diverse Worklife**

Thousands of immigrants, women, and people looking to change careers in Finland crave meaningful worklives that align with their values. The Long Way is a learning community where the unfilled promise of technology meets the untapped potential of those marginalised from tech.

### **Team: The Long Way**

#### **Team members**

Douglas Locklin

#### **Members roles and background**

Doug Locklin is an immigrant to Finland, a learner of a non-traditional age and a non-native speaker. He is also a serial entrepreneur with a strong background in ICT fields, including control systems programming, web development and Educational Technology. He ran his own automation company for twenty years, and sold, designed, installed and serviced multi-\$100,000 projects. He is a proud member of the Honest Weight Food Cooperative, and several credit unions.

#### **Contact details**

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## **Solution Details**

### **Solution description**

The Long Way is a platform cooperative for ICT learning that meets the diverse needs of people

traditionally marginalized in the technology sectors. Immigrants, women, and older workers looking to change careers are no less capable than the people who traditionally dominate the field. The Long Way is a cooperative platform where members of these communities can come together and create our own learning paths, projects and teams in forms that are aligned with our values, values that may be distinct from those of venture capital.

Learners can choose to participate in existing projects, or import projects of their own. Community projects are guaranteed to have the full support of a tech mentor, a product owner, and a scrum master. Roles are available suitable to every level of student, from beginner to senior engineer looking to diversify her skillset. All seniors and mentors are of the diverse communities the Long Way serves.

Each project has a git repository, a Trello board, and a more detailed Pivotal Tracker for atomized development task management. Projects are aligned with the ICT learning themes emphasized by FiTech, and links are provided to the covered subjects relevant to each project area. More general or remedial topics are supported by other resources, such as the curriculum developed by Girl Develop It (see <https://www.girldevelopit.com/materials>). Most work is meant to be done remotely, but mentors will schedule regular office hours in public spaces and facilitate meetups organized by groups.

In keeping with the "real-world" mandate, the work product is intended to be brought to market through the Long Way platform cooperative market, with details of ownership and business model to be determined by the community.

Much work remains to be done, as the community will be building the platform as we go.

## **Solution context**

The challenge is to create a more welcoming and supportive environment for diverse learners looking to enter the ICT field or to expand their knowledge. There are many capable people who would bring a wealth of experience, insight and perspective to the ICT fields. There are evident cultural barriers to participation and access to those jobs, and it is not fair to expect individuals from the community to bear the burden of changing all the existing organizations from within.

## **Solution target group**

The Long Way serves immigrants, women, students of non-traditional age, and neuro-diverse individuals. It is a cooperative platform built, earned and owned by the community members who contribute their sweat equity to its creation. This will also serve the broader tech ecosphere because these diverse team will invent new products, new firms, and possibly entirely new modes of lifework organization. They will be a hotbed of innovation that will inspire transformation in the broader society.

## **Solution impact**

The Long Way has the chance to transform the organization of ICT learning for non-traditional and historically marginalised populations. A project of, for and by the community with built in mechanisms for financial support, sustainability and self-sufficiency, the Long Way can revolutionize the concept of immigrant integration, workforce development, and social benefit. The type of projects that have tended to emerge are high social impact projects that don't attract venture capital

investment, as the opportunities for high financial return are not typically emphasized. The projects tend to be practical, creative, and to serve real social needs and address severe global issues.

### **Solution tweet text**

The Long Way. A new way to learn, work and create solutions to the biggest challenges we face.

### **Solution innovativeness**

The learner's ownership of the intellectual product of her academic work is a fundamental human right that is, under the current system, usually only addressed at the rarified levels of advanced research and development. By stressing the value of retaining ownership of the work product, and developing innovative forms of ownership and distribution, a platform cooperative approach will unleash creative powers that just aren't encouraged by academic environments organized under more traditional models.

### **Solution transferability**

The model of cooperative learning and embedded entrepreneurship can be extended to all the STEAM fields, with fields of artistic and creative fields being particularly ripe for opportunity. All too often people complete lengthy educational paths without ever having to confront the realities of creating a sustainable worklife that can survive in a sometimes unstable economic environment. The entrepreneurial skills, project management experience, teamwork and collective decision making developed by working with the Long Way model would serve many professions and trades outside of ICT.

### **Solution sustainability**

The Long Way's real world business model makes it at least as sustainable, and likely more so, than the typical start-up model that is currently favored. Non-traditional learners are practical, conservative and risk-averse. They can only partake of those opportunities that have a strong likelihood of stable success. By diversifying risk across a broad variety of topics, and allowing the collective wisdom of the community to decide which projects are worthy of effort, there is a great likelihood that the overall success rate will exceed that of typical tech firms following the start-up model.

### **Solution team work**

The present community projects have been created by diverse teams of students, mostly immigrants to Finland from a wide variety of socio-economic, racial, sex and age backgrounds. We worked well as teams, but did not have the support structure and path to completion that a platform like The Long Way will provide. Many want to participate, but the exigencies of making a living and finding solid jobs in reliable firms has been a big barrier. A little institutional recognition and support will go, well, a long way.