

FINALIST: MISSEY (Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting & Serving Sexually Exploited Youth)



Overview: MISSEY (www.MISSEY.org) doesn't just help youth, it empowers youth to free themselves from exploitation and abuse. Since 2007, MISSEY has devoted its energy to the heartbreaking epidemic of commercial sexual exploitation by supporting and advocating for youth who are victims of child sex trafficking. It is a survivor-centered, trauma-informed organization confronting the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in Oakland, in Alameda County, and throughout California.

MISSEY was founded by two survivors and two allies who came together with the purpose of helping CSEC victims and centering the voices of survivors. Since its inception, MISSEY has served nearly 1,000 young people in what the FBI has identified as one of the top hubs for sex trafficking in the nation.

By providing daily, weekly, monthly support, MISSEY works to ensure safe spaces, healthy relationships, and hope for girls. All of its services are focused on helping girls escape sex-trafficking, educating other service providers and agencies on how to recognize and effectively serve victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and to prevent further exploitation of at-risk girls by facilitating workshops in Oakland schools to offer the knowledge on how to protect themselves.

Grant Request: Recently, MISSEY expanded its services to survivors 18-24 years old (previously it served girls 12-18 years old). For survivors, the transition from childhood to adulthood provides major challenges. How to become independent? How to make a living? How to reduce the risk of being sexually re-exploited? Etc. The Impact 100 Grant would support MISSEY going to the next level of critical support – gaining technical skills to develop a livelihood and future career.

The Impact 100 Grant would fund the launch of a pilot career-access program with AnnieCannons (www.anniecannons.com). One of the biggest hurdles to survivors receiving training or entering an education program is lack of financial support. The Impact 100 Grant would provide a 10-week stipend, commute reimbursement, supplies, and MISSEY counseling and case management so that the survivors can attend and complete a 10-week technology training program.

The pilot is designed to ensure the greatest opportunity for success by creating “wrap-around” services. MISSEY provides the case management, emotional and financial support and connection; AnnieCannons provides the training and career support. AnnieCannons has created a trauma-informed environment in which survivors can learn software skills, but does not offer intensive support services. The “marriage” of these two organizations appears to be ideal.

Projected Impact: The impact of our grant would be life changing for the 8 survivors in the program and has the potential for being a model for the State and Nation. At the end of the 10 weeks, the survivors would not only have gained technical skills, but also would begin making money. AnnieCannons makes the transition from student to gainful employment possible. It sources and manages freelance software lifecycle services contract projects to help students earn regardless of industry barriers, leveraging revenue from these projects to expand its training. Bottom-line, a survivor with no employable tech skills just weeks prior, may now be designing websites, etc. and receiving \$20 - \$40/hour or more. Clearly, this pilot has the potential to change the lives of these survivors, their families, and many more.

Transformational Potential: As MISSEY and AnnieCannons learn from this pilot, they would have the opportunity to refine, improve and share with other organizations. There is no known model in the US for such a program currently. This pilot has the potential to become that model and to transform survivor lives throughout the country.

Sustainability: The \$55,000 Impact 100 Grant would provide 62% of the contribution of the \$89,000 pilot (the remaining \$39,000 would be in-kind contribution for AnnieCannons training and for child care at the training site). Although the pilot is dependent upon the Impact 100 Grant, the passion and commitment of MISSEY's leadership left no doubt that they would find some way eventually to fund the pilot. If the pilot is successful, there is little doubt that the results would garner on-going support and expansion.