



Grant Application: 2021 General Operating

A summarized version of LWH's 2021 general operating grant application.

CETC developed the Hero School Model to generate sustainable development, community empowerment, and democracy through formal education.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the current reality, low-income and rural Guatemalans are currently facing extreme scarcity and insecurity. Without a widespread transformation of human behavior, we must expect an escalation of the vast human misery already present. In response, Long Way Home (LWH), a 501(c)(3) seeks to mobilize people to actively participate in democracy and create innovative pathways to economic and environmental justice, through green building, employment, and education. LWH envisions communities equipped to innovate and act responsibly in the face of local and global challenges. Critical work in manifesting this mission and vision is achieved through the LWH flagship Hero School at Centro Educativo Tecnico Chixot (CETC), located in San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala.

Hero School delivers a progressive curriculum that satisfies national education requirements while also utilizing the green construction process to teach the principles of active community participation and problem solving for environmental health. Content and learning are relevant to the local context and oriented towards progress through action. This ensures that students cultivate critical problem-posing and solving skills in order to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, economic injustice, and environmental degradation. The curriculum is built on the idea that education is a vehicle for empowerment in the pursuit of health and freedom for individuals and communities. Local teachers are trained in progressive pedagogies and generate context-specific lessons to ensure learning is relevant to the low-income, rural, and largely agricultural population in Comalapa. Local builders are uplifted in their work as they learn, lead, and teach innovative, environmentally-positive construction to the Comalapan community, CETC students, and international volunteers. Local teachers, builders, and students embody the heroic action required to begin to solve the complex crises in their communities.

Accomplishments to date include:

Since 2012,

- 858 certifications of completion of studies have been issued to local low-income Comalapa youth.
- 270 primary, elementary and high school local low-income students from Comalapa have enrolled at CETC and received an accredited, empowering, and democratically-oriented education.
- Over 30 local teachers have been trained under progressive pedagogies and education for sustainable development methodologies, including Deweyan Democratic Education pedagogy and project-based learning. Such training expands not only their expertise and knowledge, but also improves their employment opportunities.

Since 2017,

- When the new curriculum was implemented in grades 7-11, students constructed 39 smoke-efficient stoves, 25 water tanks, 4 compost latrines, and 2 tire retaining walls.
- These projects address key local health challenges, repurpose waste, and generate student-led community development.
- Meaningful, full-time employment is generated for local teachers and builders.
- In total, 390 community members have directly benefited from the CETC student projects.

In 2019,

- 77 K-6 students, 51 grade 7-11 students, 27 Teachers/Directors, and 9 full-time builders were direct beneficiaries of CETC employment and education.
- An additional 400 family members of students and community members have been impacted through CETC's curriculum.
- CETC issued 12 completion of studies to its first cohort of grade 11 graduates, allowing them to apply their Hero School skill set in whichever next path they choose. 3 went directly to university, 6 will enter in 2021, 1 is awaiting admission to the Civil National Police, and 2 will remain working for their family business

In 2020,

- CETC served 123 students through door-to-door learning across grades K-11 as well as employed 28 educators and 9 green builders in full-time, stable jobs.
- Since its founding in 2005, almost 2,500 volunteers from around the world have been educated in green construction principles, through their involvement in school construction and support of student project construction

2. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Long Way Home (LWH) seeks to mobilize people to actively participate in democracy and create innovative pathways to economic and environmental justice, through green building, employment, and education. We envision communities equipped to innovate and act responsibly in the face of local and global challenges. Critical work in manifesting this mission and vision is achieved through the LWH flagship school Centro Educativo Tecnico Chixot (CETC), located in San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala. With a \$300,000 yearly operating budget, LWH is a small organization, yet, with our collaborative, action-based approach, LWH has manifested incredible outcomes in Comalapa that address a nexus of poverty challenges - education, employment, infrastructure, and health. LWH was established as a 501c3 in 2005 to formally conduct this project. In addition to establishing relationships with community members, the nascent LWH team learned many lessons, the most influential being, despite the park's large attendance and overall success, recreation is not a top priority.

As a result, since 2009, LWH has nurtured an education ecosystem, connecting green construction, formal education, equitable international volunteerism, and active participation in 21st century problem-solving. Over the last decade, the LWH builders, staff, volunteers, and donors have transformed 550 tons of trash into a fully functioning K-11 school. Our organizational goals and purpose are to continue this industry-leading and interdisciplinary work as well as to expand impact through the Hero School Model at CETC.

LWH consists of three major projects which include the following:

Education: LWH runs the Centro Educativo Técnico Chixot (CETC). The goal of the school's Hero School model is to provide an innovative space for educators to empower students to lead their community. Through the unique curriculum, students demonstrate the capacity to create solutions to local challenges and to be the architects of their own futures. CETC offers primary, middle, and high school classes. Through the Hero School curriculum, students have constructed 39 smoke-efficient stoves, 25 water tanks, 6 dry compost latrines, and 2 tire retaining walls in Comalapa and neighboring villages.

Green Building: LWH has a core team of 9 local green builders. They have lead the construction of the CETC Hero School campus, community projects, private client builds, and guide green building learning for student projects and the volunteer program. They also serve as expert liaisons for partnership projects to install village water systems. Two times per year runs LWH runs a Green Building Academy in Comalapa to train people from around the world in the complete process of building a green-designed home.

Volunteer Program: LWH runs a volunteer program for individuals and groups interested in green building techniques. Volunteer tasks cover a wide spectrum of activities: pounding tires, plastering walls, collecting materials, creating art, and more. In the process of building for environmentally positive impact, volunteers critically engage with waste, as well as unique challenges to equitable development, and leave equipped with the skills necessary to construct a healthier global future.



3. STATEMENT OF NEED

As previously stated, we are experiencing a global environmental crisis. Within Guatemala, this means huge economic and environmental challenges. In 1992, government leaders around the world received a document endorsed by 1,575 of the world's most prominent scientists titled "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity." To avoid causing "vast human misery," **this document called for immediate action "to stop the ever-increasing environmental degradation that threatens global life support systems on this planet,"** through a widespread transformation of human behavior. Data collection, specific to ozone and marine life depletion, freshwater availability, ocean dead zones, forest loss, biodiversity destruction, climate change, and continued human population growth, led to a "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice" in 2017. The 15,371 signatories concluded that "with the exception of stabilizing the stratospheric ozone layer, humanity has failed to make sufficient progress in generally solving these foreseen environmental challenges, and alarmingly, most of them are getting far worse." The United Nations IPCC estimates that **we have 11 years (and counting) to prevent further irreversible damage to the planet.**

LWH requests partial (\$42,000.00) to full (\$157,622.00) funding to support the continued operation of Hero School in San Juan Comalapa. Such funding support will ensure that Hero School can continue to innovate progressive education for low-income, climate-stressed communities, thereby increasing our capacity to partner with schools across the world to adapt Hero School curriculum to their context.



4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

LWH and CETC developed the Hero School Model to generate sustainable development, community empowerment, and democracy through formal education. **CETC is a nationally accredited private school**, following all requirements set forth by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education. Directors and teachers are all local and nationally accredited. Local builders are employed by LWH, trained in green building methodology, and serve as on-site instructors for student projects and builders for all LWH green construction projects. Through the Hero School curriculum, **students conduct surveys** to identify key development issues in surrounding communities: smoke inhalation, access to clean water, need for sanitation facilities and stable housing structures. Using these results, **students work with teachers and builders to build stoves, water tanks, latrines, and retaining walls.** These projects serve families that live in extreme poverty, often surviving on less than two dollars a day. With this curriculum, students not only learn how to design, plan, and execute large projects but also learn how to participate in the democratic process of allocating resources to address local challenges.



4. BUDGET

Hero School's general operating budget is a total of \$157,522. This budget includes the following project expenses:

- Staff salaries/wages - \$101,530
- Office space & Utilities - \$4,380
- Supplies- \$4,612
- Printing & Copying - \$500
- Travel - \$4,500
- *Staff Training (23 teachers, 5 administrators, 8 green builders) - \$42,000
*carried out in 2022

To assist in covering budget expenses, LWH engages a variety of revenue sources such as grants, fundraisers & events, in-kind donations, and our individual and corporate donations.

6. EVALUATION METHODS

The quantitative impact of the Hero School model is monitored by the number of student projects completed every semester and academic year. Quantitative success is measurable through student-led projects that are supported by the local green builders. Such projects result in local households within different communities receiving critical infrastructure items, as identified in the surveys conducted and completed by the students. Students' academic success is measured quantitatively by completion of all grade level requirements and passing of mandated national exams. Qualitatively, impact of the Hero School experience in the communities and on the students, teachers, and builders is assessed every other year, through a survey completed by LWH staff. The information on the student-led projects, volunteer-led projects, green buildings constructed by locals, and academic performance from enrolled students is shared annually with key stakeholders.



7. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The project's 2-year goal is to refine the Hero School curriculum for grades 7-11 and expand it to grades K-6 to create a comprehensive formal education model that fosters true democratic participation.

This goal is rooted in the work of critical pedagogy philosopher/activist, Paulo Freire, who criticized the passive and exploitation-perpetuating "banking model" of state education. It is also rooted in education philosopher/reformer John Dewey's work.

The main objectives and associated strategies to achieve this goal are:

- To actively respond to leading philosophers Dewey and Freire, who say education is where we must start if we are to create true democratic systems.

