



CovidSMS

Using text-message to reduce the digital gap

Seeking \$50,000

COMPANY OVERVIEW: CovidSMS is a text message platform that disseminates zip-code specific resources and information. By forming partnerships with public, private, and government entities, we create customized phone numbers to provide relevant and local information via text, which we believe is the most accessible form of communication.

CHALLENGE: 96% of low-income Americans have a cell phone, but only 54% have a computer, and 56% have internet access. We recognized early on that text messages can be received even on a basic flip phone, which is why we chose SMS to deliver relevant news and information. In addition, many individuals have inequitable access to resources due to a lack of technology literacy.

SOLUTION: We believe that leaders of cities and non-profit organizations know their local community best, which is why we have chosen to form partnerships to make customizable numbers that address their specific needs. This includes the resources offered through the number, the language options, and the ability to broadcast announcements. We also ensure that messages are short and easily digestible, thereby increasing access despite the existing digital divide.

MARKET: The target market is city governments and non-profit organizations, primarily serving low-income and homeless populations. Compared to other telecommunication companies that focus on SMS, we have a mission to increase the accessibility of information to these at-risk groups. Additionally, we have a community outreach group dedicated to working closely with these partners to find innovative solutions.

MILESTONES: We currently have a dozen existing partnerships and have four additional partners in the pipeline. Over the past year, we have secured \$25,000 in grant money, which has allowed us to subsidize the costs of development and texts for most of our partners. Currently, we are sending out more than 34,000 messages a month.

REVENUE MODEL: All our incoming money is invested back into our tech development and the cost of texts. Currently, we cover the costs up to a certain amount for many of our partners. We recognize that this is not feasible long-term and have begun implementing pricing guides for organizations that can pay. However, many small organizations have reached out to us expressing their need for accessible communication, but their financial resources are stretched thin. As we are centered on a mission to help these communities, we hope to continue raising money through grants and investors to continue providing subsidization for as long as possible.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: Our advantage comes from our team, which consists entirely of student volunteers who sit with community leaders, listen to their concerns, and create a personalized solution for them, for free! Additionally, since many of our partners do not have a background in technology development, our systems have been created to be convenient and easy to use. While there are other text-based platforms to utilize, many require prior experience to make your number online. However, with the eager team at CovidSMS, we support partners every step of the way, coming up with innovative solutions and taking an additional burden off these leaders.

COMPANY NEEDS:

We are seeking:

- Additional funds (\$50k) to subsidize the cost of texts for our partners.
- Legal support in developing telecommunication service agreements and privacy policies.
- Expansion of our network with organizations serving at-risk populations.

COVIDSMS

E-mail: contact@covidSMS.org;
hannah@covidSMS.org

Website URL: covidSMS.org

Social Media Accounts:
Instagram: [@covidSMS](https://www.instagram.com/covidSMS)

■ KEY PERSONNEL

Hannah Chiu, Co-Founder

JHU '21 Graduate | *Molecular and Cellular Biology B.S.; Psychology B.A.*

Serena Wang, Co-Founder

JHU '21 Graduate | *Public Health Studies B.A.*

Andrew Zheng, Co-Founder & Tech Developer

JHU '21 Graduate | *Computer Science B.S.; Applied Mathematics and Statistics B.S.*

Total # Team Members: 25

Total # Advisors: 1

■ COMPANY STATUS

Founded: March 2020

Industry: Telecommunications

Company Registration Status: LLC

Total Funds raised to date: \$25,000

■ RECOGNITION

- 1st place in Robert Wood Johnson General Public Innovation Challenge ([Press](#))
- Finalist for Johns Hopkins Center Bioengineering Innovation and Design COVID-19 Challenge ([Press](#))
- Interview with Engineers and Scientists Acting Locally ([Press 1](#), [Press 2](#))
- Feature in JH Newsletter ([Press](#))