MINDING THE GAP
AT GIRL'S INC.

A change management proposal by:

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INTRODUCTION

The digital divide can be defined as the disparity between demographic groups who have access to computers and therefore access to computer skills and those demographic groups who do not have access to a computer or these skills. Students who are not introduced to computers at an early age are at a disadvantage both in the educational environment and in the workforce. This disadvantage leads to lower achievement and lower-paying jobs.

Open source software has a license which allows the end user to use, redistribute, modify, and sell the software. The software is of high quality and readily available for free for the three major computer platforms, Windows, Macintosh OSX, and Linux. Educational games, graphic design and image editing, 3D modeling and animation can all be done with professional tools through open source software.

Software cost can account for a large portion of an IT budget. In community centers close to 100% of IT capital outlay could be infrastructure; computers, scanners, cameras etc. Open source software can help bridge the digital divide by spreading high quality free software into communities that would otherwise not have access to computer programs and therefore computer skills.

Girl's Incorporated of Wilmington, previously known as The Girl's Club, has been giving girls a place to go and learn after school since 1951. Girl's Incorporated currently offers programs covering athletics, science and technology, cultural enrichment, and Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy (PAP). They currently have 80 girls participating in their programs in New Hanover County. Unfortunately their computer resources are over ten years old.

Girl's Incorporated currently has five computer workstations. Two of these computers are running Windows 98 Second Edition, and two of these computers are running Windows XP. One of the computers seems to be out of order due to a bad power-supply. None of these computers currently have internet access. These computers are used mainly to play MathBlaster and run Microsoft Office.

TEAM MEMBERS

Planning/Advisory Team	
Executive Director	Tufanna Bradley
Program Manager	Delores Wallace
Counselors/Staff	2-3 Counselors and 2-3 Staff members who work at Girls Inc.
Program Participants	2-4 program participants of various ages
Participants' Parents	Parents of the chosen program participants
Funding Source	Person or group where funding is coming from

Implementation Team	
Executive Director	Tufanna Bradley
Program Manager	Delores Wallace
Counselors/Staff	2-3 Counselors and 2-3 Staff members from Girls Inc.
Tech Support Volunteer	Outside help who will set up computers

Evaluation Team	
Executive Director	Tufanna Bradley
Program Manager	Delores Wallace
Executive Committee Members	Various members from Committee
Counselors/Staff	2-3 staff members who work at Girls Inc
Program Participants	2-4 program participants of various ages
Participants' Parents	Parents of the chosen program participants
Public School Teachers	4-5 teachers from the County's Public Schools

CHANGE PROPOSAL

There is no question that the computer technology needs to be updated at Girl's Incorporated. The proposed change would install open-source software onto the five existing computers. Next funding would be secured to pay for five additional computer workstations. Instead of paying for an expensive proprietary operating system, like Microsoft Windows XP, and software, like Microsoft Office, Girl's Incorporated will able to install an open source operating system, like Linux, and open-source software, Open Office, for free.

This change was initiated externally by our task force team after recognizing a need and having a desire to see the digital divide closed. There is a high level of support within the organization to see this change realized.

Girl's Incorporated is an excellent candidate for various funding sources including national and regional grants. They currently have grants from the United Way, the City

of Wilmington, and the State of North Carolina. They also have a large donor base and offer fund raisers throughout the year. Because the open source software is free, all of a funding organization's money is applied directly to computer hardware instead of both the hardware and expensive proprietary software. This means more computer workstations for the money.

CHANGE MODEL

We are planning on using the Teleological model as our overall change model. This model focuses on top down leadership. It is our belief that once we are able to convince the executive director of the value of deploying open source software onto the center's computers, this ideology will quickly spread across the organization. .

USE POLICIES

As soon as the technology is approved the center will establish a task force to look to use policies, protection of users, and adherence to relevant laws.

SYSTEMS AFFECTED

In addition to Girl's Incorporated other systems which will be affected by the change will be the executive director, the program director, the girls attending programs at Girl's Incorporated, the girl's families, the community, the City of Wilmington, the national organization, New Hanover County Schools, as well as various funding sources.

The basic framework of any system is only as sturdy as the foundational components; each component will be affected by a system change. The executive director will experience upgraded hardware, unlimited software and a pleasure her organization is helping to end the digital divide.

The program director will be introduced to a new pedagogy with varying programs to best fit the needs of each girl through unlimited software resources.

The girls will be challenged by higher order thinking skills obtained by learning computer skills. Their personal aptitude will be challenged and developed with little restraint. Through open source software each girl will have the opportunity express themselves while learning a valuable skill.

The girl's families will be affected as they watch and learn some of their daughter's computer knowledge. The girls have the opportunity to help their families use computer skills for daily living as well as future experiences. The parents will need to continue to support both emotionally and physically their daughter's choice to develop her computer skills.

The community will be greatly affected as open source will decrease the gap known as the digital divide. Through implementing open source software Girl's Inc. will open a pathway to community projects and involvement. A result of skilled and knowledgeable girls, the City of Wilmington will begin to look to Girl's Inc. as adding to their tax base.

The Public School system will experience mentoring to fellow students from attendees of Girl's Inc. through newly acquired software skills. Costs of required software for competitive computer activities will be dramatically minimized.

On a national level, Girl's Inc. will be able to open unlimited possibilities for smaller organizations struggling as a result of limited funding. Through open source software all girls will be afforded the opportunity to excel, no matter their background or economic status.