School of Computer Science
Course 15-391

Spring 2007

Final Consulting Report

Child Watch of Pittsburgh

Christina (Qingyun) Gu

Child Watch of Pittsburgh
Executive Summary

Student Consultant, Christina (Qingyun) Gu
Community Partner, Amy Raslevich

I. Background Information

Child Watch of Pittsburgh (CWOP) is an advocacy group for issues concerning children in Allegheny County located inside the Children's Museum.   CWOP provides several programs such as the Snacks and Stories program, where snacks are distributed to and story reading provided for children awaiting their trials in the Allegheny Juvenile Court.   They service children as young as 4-5 years old up to about 21 years old.

The mission statement of Child Watch is:

> *Child Watch brings focus to the problems of at-risk children and mobilizes the community to achieve collaborative solutions.*

II. Consulting Tasks

The scope of work defined for this consulting period was that of a website plan and expansion plan for CWOP to increase external communication capabilities.   CWOP has been looking into getting a website to increase their presence in and reach out to people in the community.   It was decided that a website is the best way to communicate to a widely distributed audience and to spread their presence.

The consultant also worked with Amy, the Executive Director, and Gerry Collier, the Project Manager, to figure out a best plan for CWOP for a web hosting and development package.   Amy went ahead with designing a basic page layout on Visio and Christina and Gerry organized website content on paper.

III. Outcomes Analysis and Recommendations

Outcomes:

- *Task 1: Plan for the website*

  Amy, Christina, and Gerry have drawn up a plan for the development of CWOP's website. The plan includes order of implementation for certain parts of the website and expansion plan includes second stage development plans for already implemented parts of the website.   A general content layout was also incorporated into the website plan.   The plan is more or less completed but there may be additions to the expansion plan in the future.   The staff members have worked on the plan themselves and are familiar with the contents and the process of planning.   The website plan has been approved by CWOP's Board of Directors and is ready for implementation.

- *Task 2: Organize website content*

  The staff at CWOP worked together with the consultant to lay out the main content that they would like to see on the website.   An organizing scheme for the website content was drawn up on white board.   Steps for second and third level development of certain web content such as a message board are also outlined.   At the time of planning, the work time of those who will be implementing the website was not put into consideration.   A risk to sustainability of the plans is that the plan is too ambitious for the amount of work people can achieve within certain periods of time.   Again, continual revision to the plan may be necessary as parts of it are implemented.

Recommendations:

- *Prepare a disaster plan for CWOP*

  Disaster plans can help the organization make quick recovery of important data and files essential for the running of the organization in case of unexpected disasters such as building fires, broken computers, etc.   The plan should not take a tremendous effort on the part of the staff.

- *Keep a website log*

  Keeping a website log with statistics on website usage may help the organization see how often they update their website with new information and how it is really being used.

  This also should not take a tremendous effort as long as staff members record down what was done to the website or any feedbacks from users of the site received regularly.

Community Partner

Amy Raslevich

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Child Watch of Pittsburgh

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About the Consultant

Christina Gu

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Christina is a junior in Computer Science. She is interested in robotics.

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I. About the Organization

Organization

Child Watch of Pittsburgh (CWOP) is an advocacy group focused on bringing attention to at-risk children around the Allegheny area to the community.   At-risk children include those children who are due for judicial processes for a wide variety of reasons, including juvenile delinquency, custody issues, foster parenting, and adoptions.   They are located inside the Children's Museum near downtown Pittsburgh.

The mission statement of CWOP is:

> *Child Watch brings focus to the problems of at-risk children and mobilizes the community to achieve collaborative solutions.*

Facilities

CWOP has 3 office rooms inside the Children's Museum.

Programs

Snacks and Stories Program: snacks are distributed to children and story-reading is provided also to children awaiting their trials in the Allegheny Juvenile Court.

Juvenile Court Tours: tours of the juvenile court during days of trial are conducted on certain times during each month.

Staff

Amy Raslevich: Executive Director at Child Watch of Pittsburgh

Gerry Collier: Project Manager at Child Watch of Pittsburgh

Technical Environment

- Internet service and e-mail server provided by the museum.

- Up-to-date Dell computers running on windows XP

- A networked printer.

Technical Management

The Executive Director is in charge of making decisions on the purchase and usage of technical equipment such as new computers or printers at CWOP.   Some of her decisions are based on the budget approved for such spending by the Board of Directors.

Technology Planning

Usually the Executive Director takes an inventory of the technical equipment at CWOP and decides whether new equipment or services need to be purchased for the best interest of the organization. The decisions must be presented to the Board of Directors for approval before implementation. The Executive Director usually takes into consideration the updates of computing equipment and has recently looked more into service based technical assets.

Internal and External Communication

Internal: The staff members and the members on the Board of Directors communicate by e-mail and by phone calls. They speak in person if the other person is within reach.

External: The organization communicates to members and interested parties by e-mail, phone conversation, and word of mouth. Usually, interested parties get in contact by e-mail or phone calls and news on the organization's activities are currently mainly spread by word of mouth.

Information Management

Donor information is currently documented on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

Most other digital information are copied down into a notebook that the Executive Director has access to as a place to consult the information and to keep a backup copy of the information.

Usually digital information are kept inside e-mails and maybe printed out on paper for referring to.

Usually digital information is information sent to the organization by parties of interest such as members, Board of Directors, and coalition members.

II. Scope of Work

Task 1. Website Plan and Expansion Plan

This task was determined after evaluation of the systems of communications to the public that CWOP currently uses and the goals of their mission. In order for CWOP to increase the efficiency of their communication to members of the community, the student consultant and the Executive Director agreed upon the idea that a website would be the best and most efficient way to communicate to the public and to gain the attention of potential interested parties. A quick breakdown of what is needed for a website was given to Amy.

CWOP's current way of spreading news about their activities and events is by word of mouth. There are many limitations to this approach such as the range of people to whom CWOP can spread their presence to and the time it takes to update everyone on upcoming activities. Getting a website done will increase their abilities to communicate with the public. With the webpage package that Amy has chosen, finishing the website will probably not be very difficult to achieve.

Task 2. Website Content Organization

The Executive Director wanted to have a breakdown of website content and an organizing scheme for the web content. This can help CWOP in that it can help them save time on deciding and arguing over how the site will be arranged contents wise when they start implementing it. This again helps with their mission of reaching out to the community because the content on the website presented to the public is an important factor in what attracts interested parties to keep coming back to the website for information. Also, illogical and convoluted layouts on websites can potentially drive away users due to its complexity and difficulty of use.

This task was relatively simple but is an important step to take when it comes to making websites. Having a clear picture in the mind of how the content on a website will be laid out will save lots of time when CWOP starts implementing the site. It will help them define what to put on the site, how the layout will look based on the content needs, and an easy and user friendly scheme for organizing searchable data on the website that people may look through.

III. Outcomes and Recommendations

Task 1. Website Plan and Expansion Plan

After doing research on the different options that she can take for web hosting and website implementing, Amy has come across www.actionpotential.org.   Action Potential hosts websites for and provides web services to nonprofit organizations.   After contacting several other nonprofit organizations that use Action Potential's service, Amy learned that the CMS distributed by Action Potential with their packages are very easy to use and the service is reliable.   The main point of choosing Action Potential is not just for hosting but for the services they provide. Please refer to the appendix for more details.

During the consulting period, the following was done:
- Website layouts for the selected major sections of the website done on Visio
- A list of important content sections
- A plan for which parts of the website will be implemented first
- A plan for second stage and further development of content for the website after initial development
- Website plan and expansion plan are both approved by the Board of Directors
- Purchase of the package with Action Potential is done

Task 2. Website Content Organization

The staff deemed that it was important to get most of the content categories organized before they obtain service and start implementing their website.   The team and the consultant sat down and reviewed the list of contents that they wish to put on the website and developed organization schemes for content under each category.

Recommendation 1. Prepare a Disaster Plan

Accidents can happen all the time and preparing a disaster plan in case of accidents can be of high value to any organization.   The purpose of having a disaster plan is to decrease the amount of recovery time it takes for an organization to be back up and running in case accidents such as building fires or natural disasters happen.   The disaster plan can include regularly made backups of important files and documents in paper format or in digital format and also local html backups of the website.

Backups require mainly having copies of important documents and files, such as donor information in an offsite place so that it can be retrieved quickly in case something happens at the organization. Perhaps copy machines for paper backups and CD-Rs for digital backups.   CWOP should designate one or multiple locations to keep the backup copies at.

These steps are important because Child Watch of Pittsburgh is located inside a building that is not their own and staff members are not always in the office.   If anything happened at the office, a quick restart may be assured if CWOP had a disaster plan.

Recommendation 2. Keep a Webpage Log

Keeping a log for the website may be useful for CWOP to keep track of changes made to the website and different versions of the website that have been put out on the web as it is changed. The purpose for a webpage log is to gather information statistics such as how often the page gets updated, how many people visit the website, and comments about their website from users and members. It is also used as a system for monitoring the health of your webpage usage and comparing it what the planned usage was.

There is a software on the web, HTTPTrack(*http://www.httrack.com/*), which can go through a webpage and make a local copy of its contents in html format. This tool is free of charge. It will probably be useful to keep backup copies of the website because in case a newer version just put out on the web for the site does not work as well as the old one, the staff can roll back to the old version and edit the new version so that it will work.
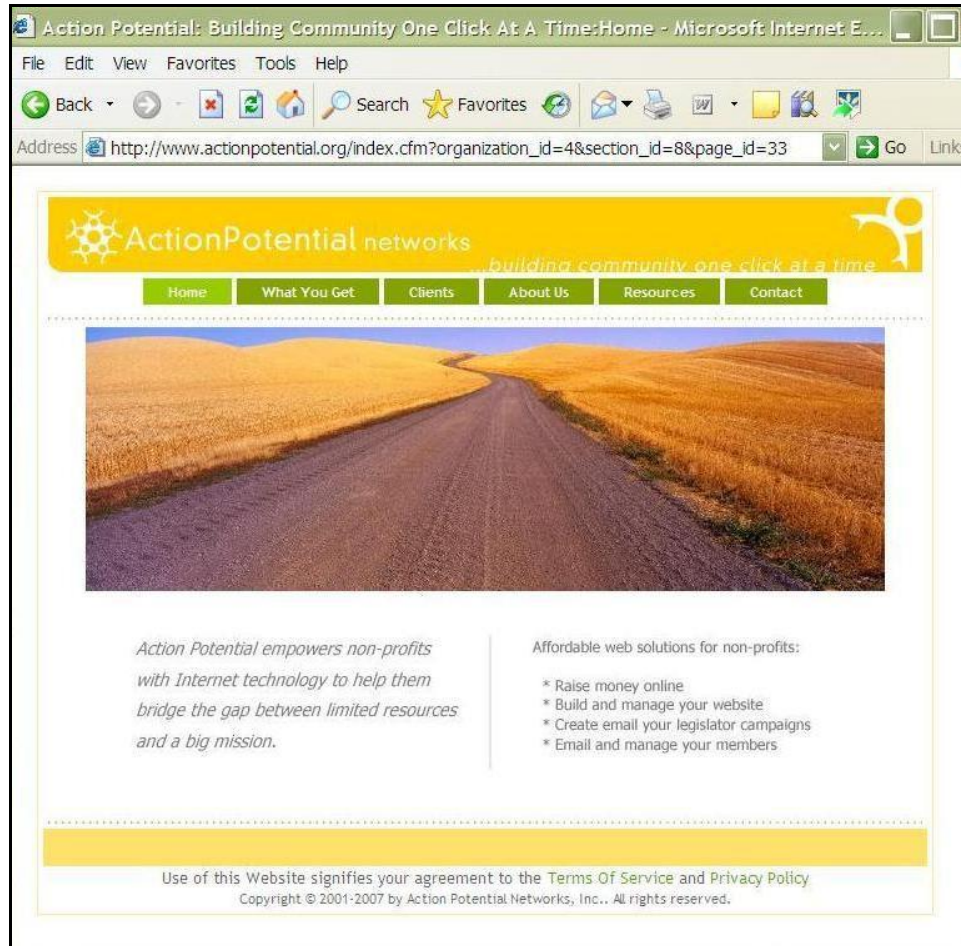
Using HTTP Track can help CWOP keep track of the different versions of their website. Keeping a record of the site counter from different time periods can perhaps help in finding trends on when people visit most, if there are periods of high user activity, and other related statistics.

About the Consultant

Christina Gu is a junior in Computer Science with a minor in French at Carnegie Mellon University. She is interested in robotics research and international studies.
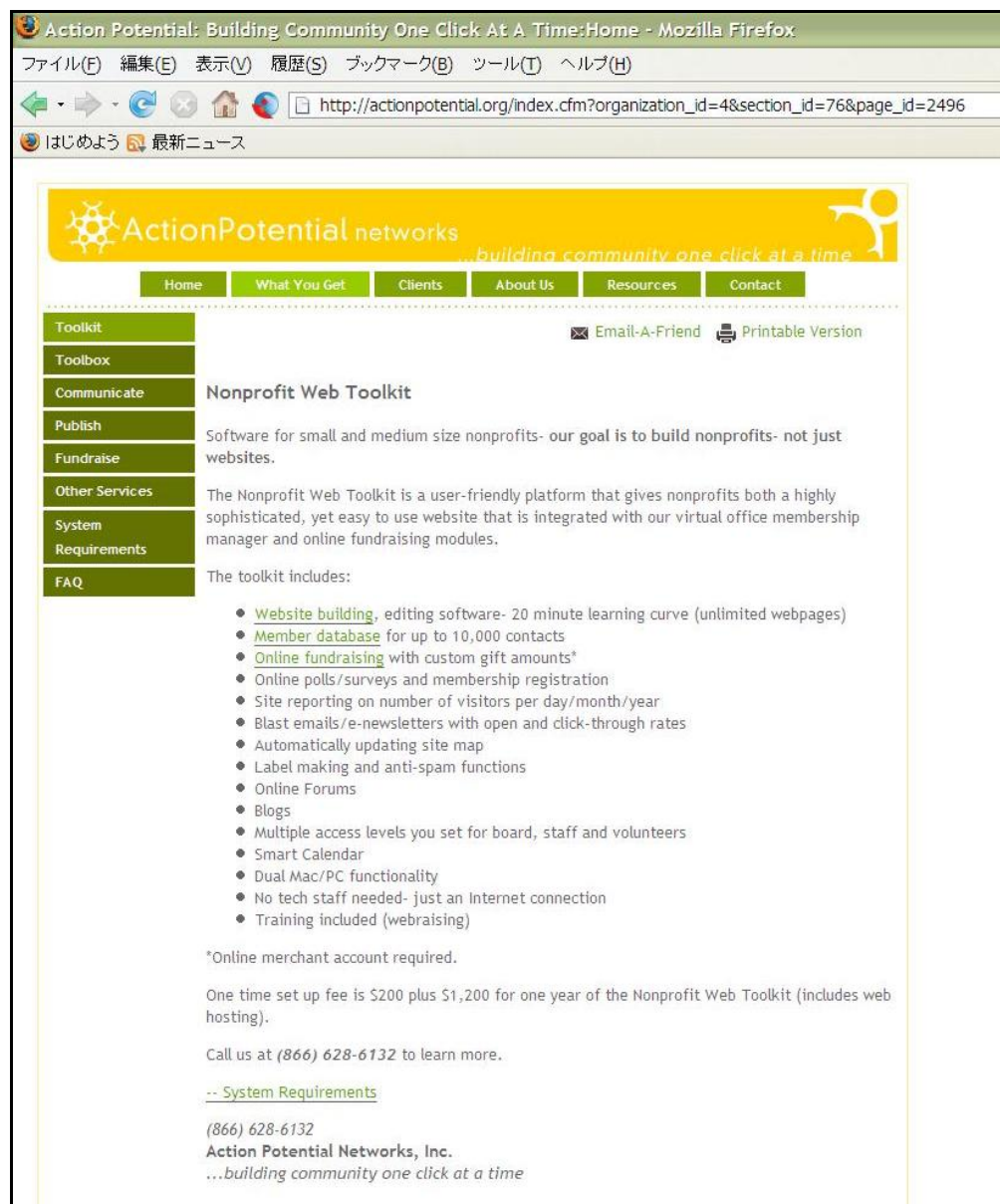
Appendix A.

This is Action Potential's website.   It is a web hosting and web service provider for nonprofit organizations.   They are located in Pennsylvania.   Action Potential offers several different web packages for nonprofit organizations of all kinds of sizes and needs.

Appendix B.

The ToolKit is the package that CWOP has looked into and has purchased recently.   It provides a variety of features and functions that is of interest to nonprofit organizations such as online donations, member database, multiple-level access, and no technical staff needed.   This is important due to the size of the staff team available in many nonprofits.   Since most small non-profits do not possess the funds to hire someone to dedicate to working on a website, the services that Action Potential provides for their customers as well as the ease of use of their software is a major attraction factor for CWOP's needs.

Past Community Partners

4 Kids Early Learning Centers
Addison Behavioral Care, Inc.
Alafia Cultural Services
Alcoa Collaborative
Allegheny County Housing Authority
Allegheny General Hospital Pastoral Staff
American Association of University Women
Animal Friends, Inc.
Animal Rescue League
ASSET, Inc.
ASTEP-Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church
Auberle
Bedford Hope Center
Bedford Initiatives
Bethany House Ministry
Bethlehem Haven
Bishop Boyle Center
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
Borough of Crafton
Boys & Girls Club of Duquesne-West Mifflin
Boys & Girls of Wilkinsburg
Braddock Carnegie Library & Community Center
Braddock Redux
Brashear Association, Inc.
Breachmenders
BTC Center
Calliope: The Folk Music Society
Career and Workforce Development Center East
Carnegie Library of Homestead
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Science Center
Center Avenue YMCA
Center for Creative Play
Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Inc.
Center of Life
Central Academy
Central New Development Corporation
Child Watch of Pittsburgh
Children Youth Ministry
Children's Museum
Christian Life Skills
Citizens to Abolish Domestic Apartheid
Community Day School
Community House
Community Human Services Corporation
Community Technical Assistance Center
Competitive Employment Opportunities
Conflict Resolution Center International
Consumer Action Response Team
CONTACT Pittsburgh
Creative Nonfiction Foundation
Dance Alloy
East End Cooperative Ministries
East End Neighborhood Employment Center
East End Neighborhood Forum
East Liberty Development
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
East Side Community Collaborative
Eastminster Child Care Center
Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center
Education Center

Every Child, Inc.
Fair Housing Partnership
Faison Development & Opportunities Center
FAME
Family Services of Western PA
Family Tyes
First Charities/First United Methodist Church
Friendship Development Association
Garfield Jubilee Association, Inc.
Gateway to the Arts
Girl Scouts - Trillium Council
Glen Hazel Family Reading Center
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Greenfield Senior Center
Guide Runners
Gwen's Girls
Hazelwood Senior Center
Hazelwood YMCA
Heritage Health Foundation
Hill House Association
Hill/Oakland Workforce Collaborative
Himalayan Institute of Pittsburgh
Hope Academy of Music and the Arts
Hosanna House
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
HUB Downtown Street Outreach Center
Hunger Services Network
Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers
Jane Holmes Residence
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Residential Services
Joy-Full-Gospel Fellowship After School Program
Just Harvest
KidsVoice
Kingsley Association
Lawrenceville Development Corporation
League of Young Voters
Light of Life Family Assistance Program
Madison Elementary School
Manchester Academic Charter School
McKees Rocks Terrace
McKeesport Collaborative
McKelvy Elementary School
Mental Health Association of Allegheny County
Message Carriers
Methodist Union of Social Agencies
Miller Elementary School, Principal's Office
Mon Valley Initiative
Mon Valley Providers Council
Mon Valley Resources Unlimited
Mon Valley Unemployment Committee
Mon Yough Community Services
Mount Ararat Community Activities Center
NAACP National Voter Fund
National Alliance of the Mentally Ill
National Association of Minority Contractors /
   Black Contractors Association
Negro Educational Emergency Drive
New Beginnings Learning Center
New Penley Place

Past Community Partners (continued)

Northside Coalition for Fair Housing
Northside Institutional Children Youth Ministry
Northside Leadership Conference
OASIS Senior Center
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh
Operation Better Block
Orr Compassionate Care Center
Outreach Teen & Family Services
Parental Stress Center
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership
Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition
Peoples Oakland
Phase 4 Learning Centers, Inc.
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
Pittsburgh Citizens' Police Review Board
Pittsburgh Foundation
Pittsburgh Health Corps
Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network
Pittsburgh Mediation Center
Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners
Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library
Pittsburgh Vision Services
Pittsburgh Voyager
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
POISE Foundation
Program for Health Care to Underserved
   Populations
Project Educate
Providence Family Support Center
Radio Information Service
Reading Is Fundamental Pittsburgh
Regional Coalition of Community Builders
River Valley School
Rodef Shalom
Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh
Rosedale Block Cluster
Sacred Heart Elementary School

Rx Council of Western PA
Salvation Army Family Crisis Center
Sarah Heinz House
Schenley Heights Community Development
   Center
Second East Hills Social Services Center
Sharry Everett Scholarship Fund
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church
Southwest Pennsylvania Area Health
St. James School
St. Stephen Elementary School
Sustainable Pittsburgh
Thomas Merton Center
Three Rivers Center for Independent Living
Three Rivers Youth
TLC-USA
Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments
Tzu Chi Wen Chinese School
Union Project
United Cerebral Palsy
Univ. of Pittsburgh - Division of Applied Research
   and Evaluation
Urban League of Pittsburgh
Urban Youth Action
Ursuline Services
Vintage Senior Center
Weed & Seed Program, Mayor's Office
Wesley Center
West Pittsburgh Partnership
Wireless Neighborhoods
Women's Enterprise Center
Working Order
YMCA McKeesport
YMCA Senior AIDE Center
Youth Fair Chance
YouthBuild
YWCA Bridge Housing
YWCA of McKeesport

Community Partner Information FAQ
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7. What does it cost to be a Community Partner?

The cost for participating in this experience is your time and your commitment to follow through as agreed. As leaders of community organizations, we know your time is of premium value. Those who have made this investment of time have reaped returns many times over.

8. What does the Community Partner have to offer Carnegie Mellon students?

- Students learn to structure unstructured problems. Community organizations are complex environments with complex problems. Your organization provides excellent environments in which to practice the art of structuring problems.
- Students come from different cultural backgrounds and most have never been in a nonprofit organization. They are practicing how to communicate across cultural differences and across technical knowledge differences. They need to be able to make mistakes and learn from them. Community partners provide a supportive relationship in which students can take risks and learn about how to communicate, how to relate, and how to maintain professionalism.
- Students get the opportunity to practice process consulting. They are learning that expertise is only as valuable as the ability to help others solve authentic problems. You provide a context in which students can practice these skills.
- We've found that Community Partners are very appreciative for the students' assistance. There is nothing more rewarding than to experience your efforts as valuable and rewarding for others. You provide that experience for students.
- Finally, you offer a glimpse into career opportunities in the nonprofit arena. Students learn to appreciate those who work in the nonprofit sector, and they grow to appreciate the role and function of community organizations. We hope this appreciation not only informs the choices they make in life, but also encourages them to care and give back to the community throughout their professional careers.

9. How do I become a Community Partner

Contact an instructor, Joe Mertz or Scott McElfresh. Send your contact information: name, title, name of organization, address, phone, fax, location of organization and your interest in being a Community Partner. You will have a telephone conversation and possibly an on-site visit. All organizations are considered, though preference is given to organizations providing services to a low-income community or a community at risk for falling into the "digital divide."

Send email to
instructors@tcinc.org
(email preferred)

Or call
Joe Mertz: 412.268.2540
Scott McElfresh: 412.268.4859

10. Caveats

- We do our best to ensure that students who sign-up for the class are committed to completing the class, however, occasionally, a student ends up withdrawing from the class during the semester. Typically, this happens when a student has under estimated the time they need for this class. We do our best to advise students so this does not happen. When it does happen, there is nothing we can do except to invite the Community Partner to participate in the following semester.
- The semester is short and the student has to do a lot of work in a short amount of time. For this reason, it is critical that you keep your scheduled appointments, do the work you agree to do, and maintain communication with the student. The student will need your feedback on reports quickly, often the next day. When we get to the final consulting reports, we will need fast turnaround time from Community Partners because we also need to get the reports published in time for the Community Technology Forum.
- If there is any chance that you think you will not be able to follow through with the requirements of this partnership, please wait until such time as when you are able to do it. Since the Community Partner is the focus for the student's learning, it is essential that the partnership be sustained for the semester.

Community Partner Information FAQ

1. What is the goal of the partnership in this course?

The goal of this class is to expand the capacity of the Community Partner to use, plan for, and manage technology, administratively and programmatically. The student is learning process consulting, project management, communication, relationship management, problem identification, and analysis.

2. As a Community Partner, what can I expect to happen?

Once you match with a student consultant, you will set a meeting schedule that you and the student will keep for the remainder of the semester. The student comes to your location for 3 hours a week. During this time you and the student work together. This is not an internship in which the student merely works on site. Rather, it is a consulting partnership in which you must work together to achieve your technology goals. The student facilitates a process that moves from assessment, to analysis of problems and opportunities, to defining a scope of work, to developing a work plan, to analyzing outcomes and finally presenting that analysis. As the Community Partner, you are the consulting client. You provide information and discuss that information with the student. But you are more than a client; you are also a learner. In process consulting the client "owns the problem" as well as its solution. The consultant facilitates the client in achieving that solution. The consultant doesn't "do for" the client. Rather, the consultant works with the client.

3. What types of activities are typically included in a scope of work?

Each scope of work is unique and depends solely upon the specific needs and opportunities of the individual Community Partner. Partnerships have focused on a wide range of activities, including: personal information management (how to use Windows, organize files, backup files, use various software packages, use time managers, use Palm Pilots and other personal information management tools, e-mail, etc.), developing a plan for how to train staff and how to incorporate knowledge and skill into job description, designing a local area network, implementing Internet connectivity, designing and developing a web site, determining effective data storage methods, analyzing the needs for an information database, designing and implementing a database, solving technical problems, designing a public community technology access center, determining the specifications for computers, developing disaster recovery plans, and more.

4. Who can be a Community Partner?

This course target individuals playing an administrative or programmatic leadership role within a community organization. Typically Community Partners are Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant/Associate Directors, Coordinators, and Managers. But, we make the selection based on the organization and the role that the individual plays within that organization, regardless of title.

5. Why do you focus on organizational leaders?

For an organization to use information technology effectively, its leaders must have a vision for how it can support the organization's mission, they must be comfortable enough to integrate technology into their personal work practices, and they must know enough to budget, staff, and subcontract appropriately. By partnering one-on-one with a student consultant, the leader has a unique opportunity to build that vision, comfort, and knowledge, no matter where they are starting from.

6. What are the requirements for being a Community Partner?

- Hold a leadership role within your organization.
- Have a computer in your office or one you could or do use in your job.
- Reliably meet with the student consultant 3 hours per week, every week, for about the 13 weeks.
- Come to an on-campus gathering 2 times during the semester. Once at the beginning and once at the end.
- Share information about your organization with the student consultant.
- Read project reports prepared by the student and give the student immediate feedback.
- Complete a brief response form after reading each report and return to the instructor.
- Keep a log of consulting sessions and send to instructors twice during the semester.
- Read the final consulting report. Give feedback to the student immediately.
- Make a brief presentation at the end of the semester (with the student) at the Community Technology Forum. (This is the 2nd on-campus gathering you are required to attend.)

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