

Women United Grant Request

Charlottesville Women in Tech (CWIT)

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Objective of Funding Request

The **Yes We Tech!** Project will have three main goals: (1) interest more girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) as a profession; (2) increase the number of women entering the technology field; and (3) improve technology support for local women in various careers. The core element of this project will be two annual events that we will inaugurate in 2017:

- **Yes We Tech-Girls Workshops.** CWIT will develop and run a series of creative and inspiring technology workshops for girls in middle schools across the region. Our target is to hold 6 workshops during the spring and summer of 2017. These workshops will help girls to develop their own tech identity by sparking interest, building confidence, and nurturing an inclusive community. **Involvement target: 60 girls.**
- **Yes We Tech! Summit: Women in Tech Career Forum and Girls Tech Competition.** CWIT will hold a Women in Tech Career Forum in late September. The forum will include tracks targeted to a variety of women, including those who: (1) are choosing careers; (2) are switching careers or returning to the workforce; (3) have limited current opportunities to discover how they can build a new career in tech; and (4) work in non-tech careers yet want to build their tech skills for career improvement (e.g., small business owners). This event will culminate with an inspiring competition among several groups formed during the middle school Workshop. **Involvement target: 200 attendees.**

These two programs will also serve to grow the membership of Charlottesville Women in Tech and boost its local profile. Increasing membership and awareness will in turn allow us to secure the funding necessary to continue the **Yes We Tech!** events in future years. Our goal will be to **add 125 new members** (50% increase) and identify one or more key corporate sponsors willing to underwrite future events.

Timeline for Accomplishing Goals

- Planning **Yes We Tech-Girls** Workshops: October through December 2016
- **Yes We Tech-Girls** Workshops: January – August 2017
- Planning **Yes We Tech!** Summit: January – August 2017
- **Yes We Tech!** Summit: September 2017
- Event follow-ups & retrospective: October 2017

Addressing Community Need. Technology and STEM careers are some of the most lucrative jobs in the country, and some of the fastest growing occupations. In Virginia, Information Technology (IT) is the fastest growing job sector, with an estimated 30,000 open technology jobs currently and a projected job growth rate of 25% across the state in future years.

Unfortunately, women are underrepresented in this market: only 25% of computer and mathematical science occupations are held by women, and only 13% of engineers are female. The key to resolving this underrepresentation is to *foster a female tech community* that will counter current attitudes. A recent study from the Girl Scout Research Institute found that even though 74% of teenage girls are interested in STEM subjects, many perceive tech as a ‘male’ discipline: 1) 57% believe that other girls their age are not considering a career in STEM; 2) 47% say they would be uncomfortable being the only girl in class; and 3) 57% feel they would have to work harder than their male counterparts in a STEM career to be taken seriously.¹

The **Yes We Tech!** Project addresses these issues in a local context both by raising awareness about the gender gap in tech and also by providing opportunities for women and girls *to see themselves in tech* locally and to join in local tech endeavors (workshops, classes, networking events, etc.). The cornerstone of this project is the **Yes We Tech!** Summit, an event that will support a wide range of local women with varying degrees of tech awareness and involvement. As the name of this project implies, we want all women to feel included in this endeavor, whether they want to change into a tech career, bolster their non-tech careers through better tech skills and increased confidence, or simply to inspire the next generation of women in tech.

Beneficiaries. Target Market: Our focus is two primary beneficiaries: (1) girls (ages 11-14) who are curious about careers in tech; and (2) women (ages 18-70+) who can benefit from increased tech skills and opportunities: e.g., those entering or returning to the workforce; those in low-paying (underemployed) professions; small business owners looking to leverage technology. **Target Geography:** Charlottesville, Albemarle, Augusta, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson and Orange Counties.

Funding allocation. Funds will be spent on materials for **Yes We Tech-Girls** Workshops in the Middle School program and for expenses associated with the **Yes We Tech!** Summit. A full breakdown of estimated costs is included in the attached budget.

Who we serve. Charlottesville Women in Tech is only two years old. Over that period of time, we have increased our member base from zero to over 250 members. We regularly serve 25-50 members each month through our tech-focused programming. We have also served over 250 elementary school girls in Girls’ Geek Days and 75 middle- and high-school girls in after-school and summer programs. Our program funding is 100% donation. We receive 90% of donations from Corporate Sponsors and 10% from Friends of CWIT.

Collaborators. We already collaborate closely with several local organizations. For this project, we will continue to work with CBIC, Girl Develop IT (Central VA), Computers4Kids, KiraKira 3D, SmartCville, iLab, UVa Dept of Biomedical Engineering, St. Anne’s-Belfield School as well as local public school districts.

Program Evaluation. CWIT will evaluate the efficacy of the **Yes We Tech!** Project through regular participant surveys, attendance participation (target 200) and CWIT membership growth (target 50% increase). CWIT will also hold a retrospective at the conclusion of the project.

¹ “Generation Stem: What Girls Say About Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math,” page 19. (http://www.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsusa/forms-and-documents/about-girl-scouts/research/generation_stem_full_report.pdf)

