

Technology Assessment Cover Letter

Dear Organizer:

Thank you for taking a moment to fill out this assessment form. The LINC Project is dedicated to helping you tap the power of electronic networking technologies in your work to confront the shredding of our social safety net. Providing information about your communication needs and available equipment will help us make specific recommendations for improving the electronic communications infrastructure in your organization.

There are four steps in the Technical Assessment process:

1. Complete an **Organizational Technical Assessment** for your organization. This document helps assess your overall communication needs, and quantifies the equipment and services shared by everyone in your office. We use this document to design electronic communication solutions that meet your overall needs and available budget. *Please complete one form for each office in your organization.*
2. Complete a **Workstation Technical Assessment** for each computer in your organization. This document focuses on specific information about your existing equipment (processor, memory, hard drive size, software, etc.), and is used to identify equipment that can be inexpensively upgraded or needs replacing. *Please complete one form for each computer in your organization.*
3. When you have completed these forms, please return them by fax or post to:
LINC Project, Welfare Law Center
275 Seventh Ave.
New York, NY 10001
fax: 212-633-6371
email: dirk@welfarelaw.org or amanda@welfarelaw.org
4. Although we don't charge for this service, we request that your organization assist us in improving our methods by responding to requests for feedback. After we send our completed recommendations, you will receive a short follow-up questionnaire asking for your help in evaluating this process and its effectiveness for your organization. We appreciate your responses, and look forward to hearing from you.

You will also find an "Assessment Glossary" attached to the form, which may explain some of the terms that are unfamiliar to you. If you have any questions about this form, please contact Amanda Hickman, amanda@welfarelaw.org or 212-633-6967.

Thank you.

Organizational Technology Assessment

Please fill out one Organizational Technology Assessment for each office in your organization.

Organization: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Assessment by: _____

Email: _____

Organizational Description

Describe your overall organizing goals:

Describe the primary organizing strategies or methods you use to achieve these goals:

What issues are most important to your organization?

Who are your key constituents? How are they organized?

What is the scale of your work? (check all that apply)

Neighborhood Town or City County
 State Regional Other: _____

What are your major Campaigns?

Please describe your organizational decision making process:

Frequency of Communication

Who in your organization communicates with each of these groups using the following communication channels? How often?

Indicate frequency using this scale:

0=Never 1=Infrequently 2=Monthly 3=Weekly 4=Daily

	In-Person	Phone	Conference Calls	Email	Web	Mail	Overnight Delivery	Fax
Membership								
Key Activists								
Board of Directors								
other orgs								
Elected Officials								
Agencies								
Media								
Researchers								
Foundations/ Fundors								
Other:								
Other								
Other:								

With which constituencies would you most like to improve your communications, if any?

Staff:(across the organization as a whole)

	How many total?	How many have email?	How many have voice mail?
Full time staff			
Interns			
Part time staff			
Board			
Volunteers			
Other:			
Other:			

Software: (please also indicate software you do not have but want to acquire or learn more about)

	Program name & version (if known)	Specific uses (describe thoroughly)
Word Processing		
Spread Sheets		
Email		
Internet Browser		
Calendar/Schedule		
Presentation		
Desktop Publishing		
Web Publishing		
Database		
Accounting/Finance		
Virus Scan		
<i>Other:</i>		
<i>Other:</i>		
<i>Other:</i>		

Does everyone have the software they need on their computer?

Does everyone in the office use the same versions of software?

E-mail and Web Site:

Do you have a shared Internet connection (Dialup, ISDN, cable modem, DSL)? yes no

If yes, please describe:

Does the organization have an e-mail address? yes no

Who is responsible for it?

Does every staff member have an e-mail address? yes no

Can staff read e-mail outside of the office? yes no

Does every staff member have internet access? yes no

Does the organization have a web site? yes no

If yes, please describe who is responsible for maintaining it and what its primary uses are:

Database

Does your organization have a database? yes no

Can everyone access the organization's database? yes no

Can the database create mailing labels? yes no

Can the database send faxes? yes no

Can the database send e-mail? yes no

Does the database record more than just contact information? yes no

Can one easily search the database? yes no

How well does your database serve your needs? (On a scale of 1 to 10) [_____]

Who is in the database? (*check all that apply*)

Members Allies Press Donors Funders Elected Officials

Resource Organizations Other:

Print Media

What print media pieces do you create most often? (Newsletters, brochures, flyers, action alerts, etc.)

How do you distribute these pieces? (ie. mail, drop spots, hand out at meetings, etc.)

Training and Support

How does your organization solve computer and technology problems? Describe:

Does your organization have or use local technical support and training resources? Describe:

Do staff get technology training as part of their orientation? Do staff receive ongoing technology training?

What hardware and software do you think your organization use most effectively? To do what?

What hardware and software do you think your organization uses least effectively? Why?

What do you see as the greatest obstacles or barriers to using technology in your work?

Do you use any “advanced” technologies like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or list enhancement of your database? To do what?

Workstation Technical Assessment

Please fill out one Workstation Technical Assessment for each computer or workstation in your organization.

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Organization (if applicable): _____ Email: _____
 Address: _____ Phone: _____

Computer Information: (See the glossary if you aren't sure where to find this information.)

Brand & Model: _____ Processor Type (e.g. Pentium II, Celeron, 486, PowerPC, etc): _____ Processor Speed (MHz): _____ Size of Hard Disk: _____ Free space on hard disk: _____ Memory (RAM): _____	Does this computer have a CD-ROM drive? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Is this computer on a LAN? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Does this computer have a modem attached to it? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Brand/model: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Internal <input type="checkbox"/> External Modem Speed: <input type="checkbox"/> 56 kbps <input type="checkbox"/> 28.8 kbps <input type="checkbox"/> < 14.4 kbps <input type="checkbox"/> 33.6 kbps <input type="checkbox"/> 14.4 kbps If this computer is connected to the Internet, who is the Internet Service Provider?
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Please describe any other hardware attached to this machine:

	Brand/model (ex. HP LaserJet 5P, HP ScanJet 3c, Iomega Zip Drive, etc.)
Printer	_____
Scanner	_____
Backup drive	_____
Other devices?	_____
Other:	_____
Other:	_____

Software Used on this Computer

Note: Please be sure to indicate the version number of the software packages you are using. This information will help us in addressing compatibility issues.

Operating System and Version Number:

- Windows, Version: _____ Mac OS, Version: _____
 Linux, Version/Distribution: _____ Other, explain: _____

Email Software and Version:

- Eudora(Please Circle One: Pro, Light or Sponsored) version: _____
 Microsoft Outlook, version: _____
 Microsoft Outlook Expressversion: _____
 Internet Mail (ie. Hotmail, Yahoo, Excite, etc): _____
 AOL version: _____
 Netscape Mail/Messenger version: _____
 Mail (on a Mac), version: _____
 Other, Please Describe: _____

Web Browser:

- Netscape Navigator, version: _____
 Netscape Communicator, version: _____
 Microsoft Internet Explorer, version: _____
 Opera, version: _____
 Safari, version: _____
 Other, please describe and include version: _____

General Software

- Word Processor, version: _____
 Database, version: _____
 Spreadsheet, version: _____
 Desktop Publishing, version: _____
 Utility Software (ex. Norton AntiVirus, Norton Utilities, etc.) , version: _____
 Other Software (please specify) , version: _____

Assessment Glossary

Some of the terms used in the assessment forms may be unfamiliar to you. Following is a brief glossary of terms that will help you to complete your technical assessment quickly and accurately:

LAN (Local Area Network)

A group of computers connected for the purpose of sharing resources. Computers on a LAN can exchange files with each other, and share common hardware, such as printers and modems. The computers on a local area network are typically joined by a single transmission cable and are located within a small area such as a single building or section of a building. LANs can in turn be connected to other LANs, forming a WAN (Wide Area Network), or to the Internet.

If your machines are already connected by a LAN, there are three kinds of wiring that could connect them:

- 10Base-2 Ethernet: 10Base-2 Ethernet looks like coaxial television cable, and runs in a “daisy chain” from one machine directly to the next. 10Base-2 wiring has a characteristic “T” connector at the back of your machine that is usually easy to recognize. (Mac or PC)
- 10Base-T Ethernet: 10Base-T Ethernet looks like telephone wiring, but is a little fatter. It runs in a “star” topology from each machine back to a central “hub” which has a series of jacks on it that look like wide telephone jacks. (Mac or PC)
- LocalTalk: LocalTalk wiring uses ordinary phone wire, and is characterized by a small plastic adapter box plugged into the back of your Mac. The box typically has two phone jacks in it. Like 10Base-2 Ethernet, LocalTalk wiring runs in a “daisy chain” from one machine (or printer) directly to the next. (Mac Only)

Processor & Memory

The “brain” of your computer is a chip known as the processor or **CPU (Central Processor Unit)**. The type and speed of this chip play a large part in determining your computer’s performance. Processor speed is measured in hertz, or Hz. Hertz is a measure of cycles per second. Audio signals, alternating currents and wireless signals are often measured in Kilohertz or kHz, a unit equal to 1000 hertz. Computer processors are measured in either mega- (million) or giga- (billion) hertz, MHz and GHz. This speed is often called the clock speed -- the higher the MHz, the faster the processor runs.

- Windows, DOS, and Linux machines often use an Intel CPU, which is designated by a name (the Pentium II & III processors are the newest models) or by numbers (486, 386, and 286 are Intel’s older chips. The 486 is faster than the 386 which is faster than the 286). Each of these chips runs at a different speed. Most Intel machines are listed with both the processor and it’s clock speed, as in a “Pentium-200” machine, which is a Pentium processor running at a clock speed of 200 MHz. Other common CPU manufacturers include Celeron, Duron and AMD.
- Apple Macintosh machines always use Motorola processor chips, which are referred to by numbers (68030, 68040, etc.) or by name (e.g. “Power PC 604” or “G3”). Each of these chip designations have associated clock speeds, which are measured in MHz.

Imagine your computer as yourself at work. The CPU is you, actually doing the work. **Random Access Memory (RAM)**, often simply called memory, is like a desk. It determines how much information you can have in front of you at any one time and how many different tasks you can juggle at once. Having adequate RAM is vital to your computer’s performance, and it is easy and quite cheap to add more. Memory and storage (see below, under hard drive) are measured in bytes, though an actual byte is so tiny that we use KB or kilobytes (~1000 bytes), MB or megabytes (~1 million bytes) and GB or gigabytes (~ 1 billion bytes) to describe memory and storage space.

To figure out what kind of processor and memory your computer has, start by looking for manufacturer's stickers on the outside of the machine. Often they will indicate both.

- On a **Mac**, you can also identify the processor by selecting "About this Mac" or "About your Macintosh" from the Apple Menu (the Apple Icon at the top right hand corner of your screen is known as the "Apple Menu").
- On **Windows 95, 98, 2000, XP, NT**, etc machines, click on the "My Computer" icon with the right mouse button, and select "Properties." Then select the "Performance" tab.
- On **Windows 3.x** machines or machines running any version of DOS, first exit Windows completely to get to a DOS prompt (c:\>). At the DOS prompt, type: MEM, which will give you the amount of memory in your computer. You are interested in the total, which is the figure at the bottom of the first column.
- On most **Linux** machines, open a terminal or shell window, and type "cat /proc/meminfo" -- this is similar to typing MEM at a DOS prompt.

Hard Drive

The hard drive is your computer's permanent storage space, much like a file cabinet. The more hard drive space you have, the more information you can store. Programs and the files they create both need hard drive space. As computer programs grow more and more powerful, they require more and more hard drive space. To find out how big your hard drive is and how much free space remains:

- **Windows 95 and newer:** open the Windows Explorer and click on your C: drive with the right mouse button. Select "Properties" and a window will open displaying information about your hard drive.
- **Windows 3.x:** open the File Manager. The hard drive size will be displayed in the lower left corner.
- **Macintosh:** look at the top of an open window in the Finder, where you'll see two numbers. Add the two numbers (which are the amount of space used and the amount free) to get the total size of your hard drive. On a newer Mac, you may also be able to choose "More Info..." from About This Mac and launch the System Profiler, which will tell you how large your hard drive is.