

What would Partimus do with \$100,000.00?

Why we do what we do.

Partimus is group of pragmatic visionaries who have already done so much to make the world a better place. We have placed Linux computers in 6 schools already - helping kids who need it most. We have done all of this with very limited means. Of course we can do more. That is why we are articulating our roadmap to help create more opportunities:

Partimus aims to bring people together to believe in the power of community, and we use technology to do it. We, the global human family, can accomplish more by working together to bridge the digital divide with free software, rather than by going it alone in isolation. Our goal is to place Linux-powered computers in public schools that can't otherwise afford computers for their students. In the past, our work has been done by volunteers. Generating an annual budget of \$100,000.00 will empower us do far more to help public schools.

Free Open Source Software, such as Linux, plays a unique role in bringing together the global human family. Humans have never before created anything that is exactly like Free Opens Source Software (called FOSS for short). It is legal to copy and share FOSS, and almost free of cost to do so. People are more willing to share if they know they will benefit from sharing, and if they know that sharing won't be expensive or prevent them from attending to their own affairs.

Our volunteers have been placing Linux-powered computers in schools since 2004, even before Partimus was formally founded in 2006. We now have contributed computers to six schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, and one school in Mexico. We support about 90 computers, which serve hundreds of children in these schools.

And now we are ramping up to do even more. Our long-term goal is to make Partimus an international leader in FOSS computer deployment for schools and non-profits. We are now in the early stages of making this happen.

Partimus: It's Magic Stone Soup.

Most children know the story of Stone Soup, and the story applies equally well to the work that Partimus is doing. According to the story, a wandering minstrel ambles into to a village square, singing a song of a magic stone he possesses. He sings that the magic stone, when added to a cauldron of boiling water, magically turns the water into a rich soup sufficient to feed the whole village. People gather to hear his song, but they are skeptical and demand to see the magic stone in action.

“Fine,” he says, “bring me a cauldron, and help me haul water from the well to fill the cauldron.” Eager to see the magic, the crowd follows him to the well, each bearing an empty bucket to bear water. A curious innkeeper donates a cauldron to hold the water. “We will need a fire,” he says, “to make the water boil. Can each home contribute a bit of kindling to start the fire?” In a short time, a crackling fire is built under the cauldron.

As the water comes to a boil, the minstrel reaches deep into his traveling satchel, and pulls out a gleaming, smooth white stone the size of a large apple for the entire town to see. He asks if there is a child present who believes the stone will make soup, because the stone must be placed in the boiling water by a child who is hungry and believes the stone will make a delicious soup. A child steps forward, and, guided by the minstrel, takes the stone and plops it into the boiling cauldron.

“Now,” says the minstrel, “we sit back and let it boil. Oh, this will make wonderful soup, but most people prefer it with a pinch of salt. Can we get a couple volunteers to add a few tablespoons of salt each?” A few townspeople trundle off and return a few moments later with salt and toss it into the cauldron.

The minstrel takes out a spoon and ladles off a bit of the boiling water. “It's getting tasty already,” he says to his audience, “but a few onions would add such a nice flavor to our soup. Does anyone have an onion or two they could give?” The minstrel goes forward in the same vein, gradually convincing the townspeople to contribute carrots and peas and barley and dumplings and even two chickens to the pot.

The aroma of the boiling soup fills the town square, creating a festive environment, as the minstrel sings songs of the lands he has seen in his travels. Tables are brought to the square, people bring out their own instruments, a band forms, and dancing ensues. Meade and beer are brought to the tables, and the minstrel ladles out soup in bowls for the whole village, as promised.

It takes a village to write a computer operating system.

In the world of Free Open Source Software, there are actually two leading minstrels, Richard Stallman and Linus Torvalds. Both started working on different aspects of an operating system, and both soon realized that writing an entire operating system would require help from other programmers. They made public announcements of their efforts, and were joined at first by 10 programmers, then 20 programmers then 100, and now millions of programmers all over the world contribute to the writing of FOSS software, including some of the world's best programmers, who are employed by the world's largest corporations, including Google, IBM, Hewlett Packard, Apple, and Facebook.

Big, for-profit companies contribute to Free Open Source Software because for them, it is non-differentiating software, meaning that it is like paved roads, something all companies need. These companies don't sell the FOSS software, they sell the products and services that run on top of the software. They each understand that it is better to share in writing the software, rather than take on the enormous costs of writing and maintaining software. The most difficult thing humans have ever done is not putting a man on the moon; it is writing the software that got him there.

An entire business ecosystem has now formed around this incredible software, for example, the Android Linux software that now runs on a large market share of the smartphones sold in the world, because Android phones are now the number one-selling smartphones globally and in the US market.

Partimus brings digital Stone Soup to public schools

Partimus' work is limited to public schools that don't have the funds to provide adequate computer labs. For example, the Creative Arts Charter School, a public school, had some computers donated, but they didn't have anyone to install the software on them and keep them running. On July 8, 2009, a parent of a student at the Creative Arts Charter School (CACS) contacted one of our volunteers, Christian Einfeldt, to say that their computers were not being used to full capacity.

At that time, the CACS computers were installed with Linux and all the great apps that come with it, but there was no one to support the teachers in using the computers. This school was a great fit for Partimus, because we supply both the machines and the technical know-how to make the machines work. Partimus is now coming to the end of the second year at the Creative Arts Charter School, where kids use the machines for essay writing, on-line research, and even complex tasks such as creating stop-motion animated stories. Similar uses are made of our computers at the KIPP San Francisco Bay Academy; the Mission Beacon Center at the Everett Middle School; the International Studies Academy; the Precita Beacon Center; and the Ascend School in Oakland, California.

We are very proud that we use of Free Open Source Software, because we can boast that we are using our donors' precious dollars very wisely and frugally. Free Open Source Software is usually available at no cost, and its licensing allows our highly skilled systems administrators and software architects to shape the software to our teachers' needs. This would be more difficult with proprietary software, and we would waste time tracking proprietary licenses to assure that we were complying with those licenses. FOSS is truly the gift that keeps on giving year over year. It is cheaper to acquire, since it is free of cost. It is also cheaper to maintain, because we don't have to contact the software makers for tech support or to make changes to the software. That savings really adds up over a five- and ten-year period.

FOSS is also cheaper to maintain, because much of the work in maintaining the actual software code is done by programmers at the world's largest companies. If FOSS is good enough for the Google's search engine, Facebook's social-networking site, Lawrence Livermore National Labs world-class super computers, and for the hot-selling Android phones, it is good enough for our teachers!

It's time for Partimus to grow!

Partimus has a proven track record. We know how to get good, working computers, install great software on them, and we know how to support teachers to do their work in the classroom. But after 7 years of volunteer's effort alone, Partimus has reached a point where its growth is plateauing, due to the demands and rigors of supporting all of these machines. Our volunteers are great, and they will always be the core of what we do, but we need to pay our core volunteers to expand and sustain the work that we have been doing. Relying only on volunteers is not sustainable in the long run, and will limit our growth and reach and scale.

How we would use \$100,000.00 – an overview.

Our first priority is to hire contract staffers who would work in eight key areas:

- 1.) Computer system installations;
- 2.) Computer systems maintenance;
- 3.) End user support;
- 4.) Professional development and education;
- 5.) Public outreach and volunteer coordination;
- 6.) Fundraising and grant writing;
- 7.) Business development;
- 8.) Sharpening the saw (business administration).

Partimus volunteers have already been handling these key areas. We are not writing on a blank slate. Our first \$100,000.00 would go to provide some of these key volunteers with paid contracts to continue their crucial mission-critical work. Each of these key areas is discussed in better detail below.

Computer systems installations.

We have largely standardized on Ubuntu GNU-Linux as the operating system for our computer installations. Ubuntu is a type of GNU-Linux (a distribution, or “distro” for short) which is supported by Canonical, a commercial for-profit enterprise founded on March 4, 2005, by Mark Shuttleworth, a billionaire investor who is also the first African astronaut. The slogan for Ubuntu is “Linux for human beings,” which means that the goal of Ubuntu is to provide an easy-to-use desktop version of the powerful GNU-Linux operating system (which is usually referred to in short as “Linux”).

Our paid Partimus staffers will be responsible for guiding volunteers in the mass-installation of Ubuntu GNU-Linux on computers for storage and swap-out. Our current system calls for us to have pre-installed computers triaged, repaired, and ready in case a computer fails anywhere in any of our schools. In the event that a computer in a network fails, all we have to do is pull that terminal off of the network, hook up a new computer, and presto, that station is now up and running again. The time to swap out a networked computer under these circumstances is usually no more than 10 minutes. These types of networks are called LDAP networks. The data is stored on a central computer, and the software runs locally on the terminals.

In the case of computers that are not part of an LDAP network, it is necessary to encourage the end users to create back-ups of their data. Often the users don't back up their data, and occasionally data is lost. One of the tasks of our paid staffers would be to oversee the creation and implementation of social systems to encourage the users to back up their data more reliably, so that it will be easier to swap out a new computer for an old one and install the data from back-ups.

Many of these installations happen during social events called “installfests”, at which volunteers come to our schools and triage computers, pull out bad parts, install new parts, and create good working machines out of donated machines. The paid Partimus staffers would be responsible for scheduling and coordinating these installfests, backed up by the Partimus board.

Computer systems maintenance and end user support.

Computers do fail, and so the paid Partimus staffers would be responsible for encouraging teachers to report problems, creating a bug list of problems facing our teachers, and fixing those problems. This is an important part of our work. Teachers often don't like technology, and they will often just abandon non-functioning computers without telling our Partimus volunteers until our volunteers visit their classrooms to ask how the teachers are doing.

This kind of maintenance is key to the on-going success of any technology roll-out. It is also a key to the source of problems facing teachers currently in schools. There is often a budget at schools for acquiring some technology, but there is often a lack of funds to staff the technology, to teach the teachers how to use it, to fix problem equipment, and to listen compassionately to teachers' complaints and address their concerns. This service is one of Partimus' most over-looked but most crucial Unique Selling Propositions (USP).

Professional development and education.

Free Open Source Software (FOSS) evolves at an amazing rate. The Magic Stone Soup development model of FOSS is truly astounding, in that it allows people all over the planet to develop and bug-test software at a rate that cannot be matched by most proprietary software development models. That is why it is Linux that put the Mars rovers on Mars, and that is why it is Linux that powers the IBM Watson super computer and 95% of the world's super computers.

As a result, it will be important for our paid Partimus staffers to budget a certain portion of his or her month to exploring and testing new software packages that might benefit our teachers. This will require the paid staffers to spend time talking with the teachers about what functionality is needed in their software apps, and then going out and finding FOSS apps that meet those needs.

Public outreach and volunteer coordination.

The key to making a FOSS computer system into a dynamic, thriving part of a living social system such as a school is engaging the stakeholders. Teachers must feel that they are the owners of their systems, or they will not do their part to maintain these systems, use the systems, and develop in their students a sense of pride in their equipment.

There are several key examples here. One is the use of audio headphones. If the teachers don't feel ownership of the headphones, they will allow their students to leave the headphones on the floor after use, which brings a sloppy appearance to the computer lab. It will be the job of the paid Partimus staffers to spend time speaking with the teachers to spot social situations in which the teachers do not feel engaged with the computer systems, and then encouraging the teachers to take action to develop a pride of ownership.

The paid staffers will also be responsible for attending GNU-Linux community events to raise the profile of Partimus in the Free Open Source Software community. The FOSS community is

comprised of everyone from the hobbyist who tinkers with computers in his or her home, to the highly skilled engineers of Google, IBM, Facebook, etc., and the business managers in those companies who are responsible for the business implementation of these complex and powerful systems.

Each of these types of people will be potential strategic alliance partners for Partimus, and it will be important for the paid staffers to learn how to develop strategic partnerships. Strategic partnerships will be key to taking Partimus to the level of international recognition as the premier international leader in FOSS computer deployment for schools and non-profits.

One of the paid staffers should also be encouraged to join Business Networking International (BNI), which is a very powerful networking organization that has plowed tens of millions of dollars into refining the art of business networking. BNI's refined networking methods are super helpful in building a referral network that can transform any organization from an average organization to an above-average leader in its field. BNI is particularly effective in brand-building for organizations, such as Partimus, which don't have unlimited advertising budgets to get out its message.

Fundraising and grant writing.

The Partimus board will, of course, contribute significantly to fundraising and grant writing, but the paid Partimus staffers will be expected to write grants several times each year, and to budget time monthly for researching and applying for grants. The paid Partimus staffers will also be responsible for coordinating and carrying out three annual fundraisers for Partimus.

The paid Partimus staffers will also be responsible for selecting, designing, and selling merchandise to the public as a method for creating Partimus brand awareness, and as a source of revenue.

Business development.

Non-profits increasingly need to develop a source of income which is independent from donors, and which is based on the delivery of products and services to generate revenue. The Partimus board has explored the prospect of sensitive data destruction as a method of generating revenue for Partimus. We would offer businesses the service of taking their legacy machines and securely destroying sensitive data on their machines. If the board develops this strategy, the paid Partimus staffers would be responsible for heading up this revenue-generating activity and implementing it.

Sharpening the saw (businesses administration).

The management of any business, whether for-profit or non-profit, requires a good deal of nuts-and-bolts management, in terms of paying insurance, managing the bookkeeping service, and making sure that taxes are paid. The paid staffers would be responsible for heading up this effort.

Join the Partimus Stone Soup Party!

If you like what you have read here, and would like to experience the joy of supporting students to learn crucial digital skills, please consider becoming a regular part of the Partimus community. Please contact Christian Einfeldt at einfeldt@gmail.com to [find out how you could donate your time or funds to help make the Partimus dream become a reality!](#)