Girls Write Now serves the hardest hit communities in New York City: low-income, underserved high school girls and gender-nonconforming youth, many of whom are already in vulnerable financial situations and who fear for their parents who are essential workers, including nurses and MTA workers. As they feel the strain of remote learning, our mentees report increased stress and anxiety. Many can’t access technology needed to continue their studies, and all are grappling with the emotional impact of living through a pandemic. Even a small disappointment, like a canceled high school graduation, impacts a teen greatly.

We are enriching and enhancing our programs throughout the duration of this crisis, including the crucial upcoming season for teens—summer 2020.

COVID-19: IMPACT ON OUR POPULATION

During a crisis, Girls Write Now’s programs are especially relevant and in demand. We offer a safe space, inspired curriculum, and welcoming community that, now more than ever, are essential to the development of the next generation of leaders. In short, no matter what happens, we are a home for thousands of multigenerational writers—from throughout the five boroughs and originally from around the world. Our writing and mentoring programs center on intimate, engaging, small-group gatherings with mentors and mentees, as well as the community at large. The rise of COVID-19 and New York State’s pause have resulted in the need for a drastic shift in the way that Girls Write Now conducts its core programs. Through all of this, we haven’t missed a beat, never once stopped programming, pivoted, and innovated.

INVESTING IN GIRLS NOW, THE WRITERS AND LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Girls Write Now is a leader in making this historical transformation to online learning while doing what we always do, writing and mentoring during critical moments in young people’s lives.

Should social-distancing orders still be in place for the 2020-2021 program year, our current innovations and adaptations we allow us to conduct all programming virtually, with new and expanded offerings.
FUNDING WILL SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMMATIC INNOVATIONS

VIRTUAL CURRICULUM: We are transforming place-based pair sessions and group workshops into interactive experiences with facilitated small seminar discussion in breakout rooms on Zoom and Slack. Recent workshops: Worldbuilding, Information Design, Data Visualization, Scriptwriting for Video Games, and much more.

GIRLS WRITE NOW LIVE: This year our spring performance series has become live, multi-genre, multimedia experiences on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube, available for an expanded audience. For our April pilot alone, over 1,000 viewers participated worldwide from Brooklyn to Botswana.

EXPANDED DAILY PROGRAMMING: With Pair Prompt Parties every Tuesday and Thursday, Community Chats on Wednesdays, our beloved Friday Night Salons Series opened up to the public every Friday, and our regular full-day Saturday workshops, we have dramatically increased our innovative, inspiring, and customized programming—nearly every day of the week!—and for a wider audience.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMING: We are offering new ways of addressing the needs of our mentees as they cope with these challenging times, including Wellness Wednesdays to share curated life resources from food and internet accessibility to mental health and finances—along with plenty of weekly exercises for the mind, body, and soul. Our Community Chats offer mentor or mentee-only sessions where peers come together to share thoughts, feelings, and coping strategies in real time.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT: We share much of our valuable resources and curriculum through our social channels. Over a 28-day period, we saw on Twitter a 118% increase in tweets, with an average of 3K impressions daily, double the amount of previous months; on Facebook a 1.189% increase in post engagement; on Instagram, an average impression rate of 1.2K with ~400 visitors on our Instagram profile each day. Over 300 new visitors joined our mailing list, bringing our total subscribers to 21,000+. The online platform Slack, a program requirement for mentors and mentees, now serves as a lifeline with 13,000 messages sent each month.

MULTIMEDIA PUBLICATIONS: Our online showcase of writing and art takes on even greater importance in the COVID era. In times of crisis, we find ourselves turning to writing to help make sense of the world around us—to remind us that there is always hope, that words help bridge the gaps of isolation, and that by sharing our stories we are never alone. We’ve used this opportunity to not only develop online website portfolios, but for the mentees’ original multimedia work to drive an entire website redesign positioning Girls Write Now as a “channel” of mentee podcasts, videos, design, writing, and more. Our community even collaborated on a new zine called “The Girls Write Now Guide to Life in the Time of Corona,” chronicling everything from recipes and meditation mantras to guidelines on crafting.

PROFESSIONAL & ALUMNAE DEVELOPMENT: Our programming doubles as professional development for mentors and alumnae, many of whom are artists and freelancers struggling more than ever. Girls Write Now is here to help them with tools, networking, peer support, and socialization.

FUNDRAISING RISKS AND NEW EXPENSES

Girls Write Now has a solid financial position, a strong emergency plan, and a modest reserve. But like all nonprofits we remain vulnerable to funding cuts across all revenue streams, as foundations tighten their belts, individual donors feel the pull of the market, and government grants at all levels are threatened by budget reallocations. We are forecasting a sustained loss of revenue for the next fiscal year but we plan to uphold our commitment to staff without layoffs. The majority of Girls Write Now current budget is personnel, plus we are projecting new and emergency needs with technology consultants (Salesforce, Google), subscriptions (Zoom, Slack, third party tools), technical curriculum developers, event producers, media trainings, teaching artists and speaker fees, website developer/designer, low-bono legal counsel for loans, new IP issues, and updates to social media and privacy policies, and parental consent forms.