Why R? Webinars

Why R? Foundation

01 October 2020

Signatories

The applicant is the Why R? Foundation, which is incorporated under Polish law. (More details can be found at the Why R? website: www.whyr.pl)

The Why R? Foundation management board is

- Marcin Piotr Kosinski (chairman),
- Bartosz Sakiewicz (vice-chairman),
- Agnieszka Borsuk-De Moor (vice-chairman),
- Michal Jan Burdukiewicz (amanuensis).

Seminar Series Project team

- Marcin Kosinski (Project Leader)
- Michal Burdukiewicz (Project Officer)
- Kevin O'Brien (Project Officer)
- Lais Carvalho (Presenter & Research)
- Ahmadou Dicko (Presenter & Research)

Consulted

- gwynn sturdevant, RForwards member, RConsortium DI-WG member, RLadies DC organizer, useR! 2020 Diversity committee
- Lais Carvalho ,Member of Python Ireland, Volunteer at PyjamasConf and EuroPython
- Joseph Rickert, Chair of the R Consortium

The Problem

The Why R? foundation is based in Poland, but has collaborators all across Europe and Africa (This geographic constraint is fundamentally due to similar time zones.) The foundation has run a series of pre-meetings since 2016 and a webinar series since April 2020. There have been 16 webinars to date. The ambition of Why R? is to use proceeds of conferences and pre-meetings to support R community events around the world. Why R? will seek to build strong corporate relations to strengthen its ability to provide fiscal support by giving grants to the R community.

Webinars usually take place on Thursday at 6pm UTC, evening time in Europe and Africa. We find that more people watch the recordings that are available online than the live stream. In accordance with best community standards, we try to invite speakers from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, and to highlight the work of RLadies.

So far the webinar series has relied on volunteers who maintain the series in the free time. To sustain the series, the Why R? foundation would benefit greatly by additional personnel and resources. If funding is available, this would enable the Why R? foundation to recruit and pay additional team members. Management of the funding will align with the committment to diversity and inclusion held both by the Why R? Foundation and the R Consortium.

The proposal

Overview

The goal of this project is 1. to support the continuation of the Why R? webinar series, 2. to create a parallel series of video logs of R community members around the world.

Component 1: The Why R? webinar series

The Why R? foundation proposes to create a panel of presenters to present weekly webinars. This panel will be drawn from under-represented minorities and called the Funded Presenter Panel. It will consist of two or three people appointed by the Why R? foundation, and approved by the R consortium.

The proposal envisages the production of 30 one-hour webinars as part of this programme (i.e. a pilot programme). The project will be considered completed when 30 webinars have been made under the terms of reference.

The content of the webinars will focus on the R programming language. For diversity of topics, the intersection of R and other technologies can be included. Similarly, professional issues likely to be faced by a large number of R users can be included in the programme. The complete subject list of webinar titles should align with reasonable expectations of content for an R conference.

Duties of the Presenters

The duties of the presenter are to research the topic and prepare questions for the interview, take part in a test recording (i.e. a sound check) in advance of the scheduled webinar, present the webinar, introduce the speaker, and afterwards, leading the Questions and Answer session. They will also manage the promotion of the event on Social Media. They will create visual identities for use on Social media. (The Funded Presented Panel will also be responsible for the implementation of Component 2.)

While this proposal envisages one presenter per webinar, we will agree to have two presenters, if preferred by the R consortium.
The fundamental principle behind this proposal is "Representation Matters". The visibility of members of under-represented minorities in positions of responsibility and leadership would be encouraging to under-represented minorities to engage in the R community (i.e. giving talks, co-organizing community events etc).

Webinars scheduled for Asia and Oceania

In addition to the main slot on Thursday 6pm UTC, it is our ambition to have a limited run of webinars scheduled for a time suitable for Asia and Oceania. This series would highlight the contribution of the R community in that part of the world. The webinars would need to take place at an appropriate time (e.g. Tuesday 11am UTC). Constructively this means that there will periods with two scheduled Why R? webinars per week. A reasonable expectation is 8-10 webinars for the Asia/Ocean time zone, but it is contingent on speaker availability.

Webinars in other languages.

All of the webinars have been conducted in English. Subject to the availability of speakers, we will explore a limited of run of webinars in French and Portuguese. The Why R? webinar team has team members fluent in both languages.

Other Considerations

Webinars that take place during the period, but are not presented by a member of the Funded Presenter Panel, shall not be counted as part of agreed number of productions. This situation may arise no member of the Funded Presenter Panel are available on the date of particular recording (e.g. they have been engaged for similar work by other R conferences).

Component 2: The Why R? World Video Blog Series

This component is the creation of a series of short videos featuring R community members from around the world. These videos would be available on the Youtube Channel.

Curatorial Policy

In contrast to component 1 (e.g. Why R? Webinars) the "Why R? World" series would feature the experiences of a broad spectrum of R users around the world.

These interviews would explore the lived experience of being an R user (i.e. the featured guest or guests) in various locations around the world. The curatorial policy shall favour a broad spectrums of locations from all continents of the world, and a broad series of subjects areas, particularly regions not typically represented in the R community.

Contributions from Novice R users will be sought. Technical content will not be typically featured, but would not be refused. In a limited number of cases, the guest may not be an R user, if the content aligns with the curatorial direction of the overall "Why R? World" project.

Techical Details

- Sets of videos will be released periodlically as a "season"
- Each season of the series will be contain about 10-12 videos.
- The videos will be approximately 15 minutes long.
- The videos will be recorded asynchronously (i.e. not livestreamed).

Duties of the Presenters

The duties of the presenter are very similar to Component 1, i.e. to research the topic and prepare questions for the interview, take part in a test recording (i.e. a sound check) and edit the recordings. They will also manage the promotion of the event on Social Media. They will create visual identities for use on Social media.

Legacy

By creating these videos, we hope that R commmunity members from all around the world will be motivated to develop full length talks, with technical content, for future R conferences all around the world.

Desemination of Work

All recordings will be freely available on the Why R? Youtube channel. Why R? foundation will produce, and promote each webinar, and is responsible for the recruitment of guest speakers. Since the launch of webinar series in April 2020, the Youtube channel has attracted 3,170 Subscribers with 43,184 views. (These figures are based both on the Webinar Series and recordings from the Why R? virtual conference which took place in September 2020.)

The webinar series will be used to promote the R consortium brand. For the duration of the project, R consortium branding will appear on all webinar productions (including ones that are not presented by members of the Funded Presenter Panel).

Why R? and R Consortium would consolidate their positions as strong global brands.

Requirements

People

This work will be completed by the team at Why R foundation, some of whom are already actively working on the project.

Processes

We have a COC that has worked since we started in 2016 and we will continue to use. We anticipate having meetings every 2 months about progress and quarterly ISC meetings.

Payments

Payments will be processed by the Why R? Foundation, but can be processed by the R consortium if preferable. Payments will be made on the basis of professional services. Presenters are responsible for their own tax affairs. Payments will be made to each presenter and travel expenses will not be funded.

Funding

Item	Cost (Euro)
Component 1 Stipends (30 Webinars)	5,100
Component 2 Stipends (40 videos)	3,200
Total	8,300

Project plan

Start-up phase

October 2020 - December 2020:

- Invite new team members
- Team orientation for all members
- First series of webinars under funding

January 2021 - June 2021

- Regular meetings with R consortium representatves to monitor progress and discuss list of invited speakers
- Remainder of webinars under funding

Technical delivery

Other aspects

We will continue to use Twitter and youtube to increase attendance at events.

Success

Definition of Success

We define success as successful continuation of the Why R? webinar series, with contributions from R users from a broad diversity of specicialities, backgrounds and geographic locations. Additionally we foresee stronger relationships with corporate partners, and enter into sponsorship agreements. This will sustain Why R? foundations ability to provide financial support to the broader R community.

Measuring success

In the first instance, Success would be defined as the completion of agreed number of webinars, with each webinar receiving 500 views on average within 28 days of the initial livestream.

We will measure this by the outputs that we have made freely available to the R Community. We will summarize information and make it available to all.

Future work

If successful, the Why R? Foundation will seek to continue the webinar series beyond the duration of the project.

Why R? notes the strong eco-system of the R communities in the American continents. Why R? will seek to support the growth of these communities, and will be available for future collaborations. For the foreseeable future, the Why R? foundation does not plan run R community events, unless in partnership with a local entity. This does not preclude people from the Americas participating in our current pattern of events (i.e. events scheduled for European and African time zones)

Key risks

We are hopeful that we can continue to find high quality speakers from a broad diversity of specicialities, backgrounds and geographic locations, who have the time to work with us.