

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 (chair),
- Bartosz Sakiewicz (vice-chair),
- Agnieszka Borsuk-De Moor (vice-chair),
- Michal Jan Burdukiewicz (amanuensis).

Seminar Series Project team

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

Consulted

- gwynn sturdevant, RForwards member, RConsortium DI-WG member, RLadies DC organizer, useR! 2020 Diversity committee
- LaÃs Carvalho, Member of Python Ireland, Volunteer at PyjamasConf and EuroPython
- Joseph Rickert, Chair of the R Consortium.
- Additionally please note the many R community members who have given webinars since April 2020.

The Problem

The Why R? foundation organizes the annual Why R? Conferences, as well as a series of R community meetups, hackathons and the 2020 R Webinars. The Why R? foundation is based in Poland, but has collaborators all across Europe and Africa. This geographic constraint is fundamentally due to aligning 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, with 4 more scheduled for October 2020.

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 webinar programme in the free time. To sustain the programme further, the Why R? foundation would benefit greatly by additional personnel

and resources. Additional funding would enable the Why R? foundation to recruit and pay additional team members. Management of the funding will align with the commitment 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.

The Why R? Foundation will aim to provide a platform for a broad spectrum of speaker from a wide range of backgrounds, subject areas and geographic locations. We hope to schedule more R users from the Global South (i.e. Africa and Asia).

The list of invited speakers would comprise a mix of established speakers who already have are well-known in the R community, and lesser-known speakers who do not often appear in R community events. All speakers are at the same level of billing. Scheduling is influenced by speaker availability and the amount of advance notice needed by the speaker. Established speakers are able to provide talks at short notice. The capability to maintain a programme over a long term would allow us to recruit speakers who would need a lot of preparation time, particularly if it is their first talk.

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 Why R? 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. People in outlying locations will be particularly favoured for selection. 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.

Technical Details

- Sets of videos will be released periodically as a “season”
- Each season of the series will 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 Funded Presenters

For component 1, 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. While this proposal envisages one presenter per webinar, we will agree to have two presenters, if preferred by the R consortium.

For component 2, 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.

The presenters will assist the promotion of the event on Social Media, and create visual identities for use on Social media.

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).

Why R? Foundation members will provide assistance to the funded presenters on an ongoing basis, but will not be financially rewarded.

Dissemination 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. Why R? will actively promote the events in advance, and advertise the recorded content.

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.)

Promotion of the Webinars.

The Why R? Foundation will continue to use Socia media platforms (e.g. LinkedIn and Twitter) and Youtube to increase attendance to the events. The Why R? Foundation has developed a very strong social media presence in 2020.

Legacy

By creating these videos, we hope that R community 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.

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

Requirements

People

This work will be completed by the team at Why R foundation, some of whom are already actively working on the project. The existing personnel will be complemented by the Funded Presenters.

Processes

The Why R? foundation have a Code of Conduct that is accessible on the Why R? website. This Code of Conduct is updated on an ongoing basis. Additionally, a Code of Conduct specific to this project will be implemented. This Code of Conduct will align with COCs for similarly structured projects in the R community.

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

The Budget for this proposal is tabulated below. Both budget items are labour costs.

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 that use funding.
- Recording of first set of Why R? World Videos.

January 2021 - June 2021

- Regular meetings with R consortium representatives to monitor progress and discuss list of invited speakers.
- Production of the Remaining programme of webinars that use funding.
- Recording and release of remaining series of Why R? World Videos.

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 specialities, 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. The processes are very transparent in nature and ongoing performance will be clearly visible on the Youtube Channel to all members of the R community.

Future work

If successful, the Why R? Foundation will seek to continue the webinar series beyond the duration of the project. The project will be a continuation of what is described in this document. Additionally the Why R? foundation would like to resume the Why R? pre-meetings series (i.e. in person events) when the opportunity to do so will arise again.

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 specialities, backgrounds and geographic locations, who have the time to work with us.