



.Layer

January 21, 2019

Prof. Mary Thompson
Chair of the Fundraising Committee
Statistical Society of Canada

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Subject: education and outreach proposal

Dear Prof. Thompson,

I am writing to you on behalf of .Layer (pronounced “dot layer”), a community created for promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing in the field of data science. As an organization in its creation process, we were very pleased to learn about the recent call for education and outreach proposals of the Statistical Society of Canada. I will try, in this letter, to clearly describe who we are, what our mission is, and how we intend to put our words into action. We hope that you will find our proposal convincing enough to grant us your support.

Who we are

The project started during the 2018 Summer, when some of us decided to organize a week-end of presentations and activities related to data science. The high-level motivation of this meeting was to bring together friends of friends for a brainstorm about how to unite the different data science communities we were part of. Fifteen people responded to the call and out of it emerged .Layer, an open community looking forward for anyone to join in and contribute. It now consists of more or less **[redacted]** students and/or practitioners in the fields of statistics, actuarial science and computer science, residing in either Montreal or Quebec City. Members responsible for the present proposal are:

Jean-Thomas Baillargeon, M.Sc. FSA, CERA
PhD student at Laval University (computer science)
Lecturer at Laval University
Former actuarial analyst at Industrial Alliance (6 years)
Former data product manager at Xpertsea Solution (2 years)

David Beauchemin
[redacted]

Christopher Blier-Wong, M.Sc.
PhD student at Laval University (actuarial science)
Masters student at Laval University (computer science)

Antoine Buteau
[redacted]

Stéphane Caron, B.Sc.
Actuarial analyst at Intact Insurance
Masters student at Laval University (mathematics and statistics)

Marie-Pier Côté
[redacted]

Nicolas Garneau

[??]

Samuel Perreault, M.Sc.

PhD student at Laval University (mathematics and statistics)

Research & innovation analyst at The Cooperators Insurance

All of us affiliated to Laval University's mathematics and statistics, and actuarial science departments are members of the SSC, with Marie-Pier Côté being part of the committee on new investigators as well. Three of us, Marie-Pier Côté, Christopher Blier-Wong and Samuel Perreault presented at the 2018 SSC meeting.

We are currently in the process of registering a nonprofit organization for administering the community's activities. Here is a sketch of the structure we intend to put in place.

Board of directors: The board consists of five people: an executive president, a secretary, a treasurer, a vice-president assigned to communication and a vice-president assigned to external affairs.

Members: In addition to contributing and participating to the organization's projects and events, members have the right to vote during the general assemblies. One must first be accepted by the current members in order to gain its member status.

Supporters[Sympathizers?]**:** This group includes any other individual involved in the community's projects and events. They can share their opinion, but have no right to vote during assemblies.

This simple structure allows the organization to be as inclusive as possible while assuring that funds and efforts are spent on activities that are aligned with its mission. Any supporter minimally involved in the community, and demonstrating that he or she shares its inclusive values, should expect to be accepted as a member if requested.

Our mission

The main objective behind .Layer is to create both virtual and physical meeting places, for the curious as well as the experimented, to learn, share and exchange ideas related to data science; hence the slogan *meet, learn, & share*. We did not identify a sole method for achieving this objective, but committed to help each other in our current and future projects that are aligned with it. So far, we have been working mostly on the two following initiatives.

- (a) *Meetup Machine Learning Québec*: This project was founded by Nicolas Garneau. As the name suggests, it is dedicated to the organization of meetups and conferences related to machine learning in Quebec City. Before .Layer even existed, *Meetup* had already organized three events in 2017-2018 (at Laval University/XpertSea's offices/Coveo's offices), attracting more than 100 people in total. Since the creation of .Layer, Nicolas joined forces with many others to organize events of even greater scope. Concretely, we organized both a conference (Laval University) and a hackathon (Bloc Solution's offices) on statistics and machine learning applied to the insurance domain; as well as a workshop on natural language processing (Laval University). These events attracted an approximate total of 200 people. They were organized on a voluntary basis and were paid for (rooms, food, beverages, web services for GPUs, etc.) by our sponsors: Intact Insurance, Co-operators Insurance, Bloc Solutions and, from Laval University, the Big Data Research Center (CRDM), the Chaire d'actuariat and the service de placements (SPLA).

- (b) *.Layer blog*: During the founding week-end of .Layer, we agreed that a blog would be great as a first project to collaborate on, as well as a convenient way of reporting our activities and sharing our ideas. We ourselves were surprised by how quick the project evolved: the blog is already up and running at dotlayer.org.

We seek your support for helping us continue structure the community; improve our website; organize more educational events; and kickoff new projects. These four axes are detailed below.

1. Community organization

We are lucky to have among us a professional graphic designer, Jean-Christophe Yelle, who created, at no cost, the logo that you can see in the head of the letter. Among the other things we wish to integrate to the community are personalized e-mail addresses (@dotlayer.org) for the administering members, reusable cups for our future events and organize more casual events where members have opportunity to chat together and invite new people to join and get in touch with the group. ++++++ ****[WHAT MORE? - @steph @bute - membership fees here?]****

Member in charge: Stéphane Caron

2. Blog

We are now working on a bilingual display of the website (en/fr). So far, some of the articles are in English, some in French. In order to be as inclusive as possible, we would like to have the important ones in both languages. We can and will do it ourselves, but a little review from a professional would be of great use.

As soon as the translation challenge will be behind us, we will focus on a strategy for promoting the new articles and the website in general. ****[HOW will we spread the word?]****

Member in charge: Antoine Buteau

3. Educational events.

One of the members of .Layer, Nicolas Garneau, is the founder of *Meetup Machine Learning Québec*,

We are seeking new funds to organize similar events, this time related to sports analytics ****[TBD]****.

****[MORE ON: WE WANT TO EDUCATE THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT WHAT DATA SCIENCE CAN DO FOR THEM.]****

Member in charge: Nicolas Garneau

4. New projects.

Podcast. Put focus on the audience (young people interested by studies/careers in data science).

Member in charge: David Beauchemin

In addition to the funds obtained from sponsors, we intend to ask voluntary contributions from our members/sympathizers. Your support would hence help us reduce such burden on individuals.

Administration of the funds

Administering the funds and reporting how they are used is the *raison d'être* of the nonprofit entity tied to .Layer. Until its official incorporation, I, Samuel Perreault, take the responsibility of providing such report to the Statistical Society of Canada. With this letter are provided a budget and a timeline for the administration of the funds. ****[state total amount - say we do not expect everything to be financed by them - that for each event we look for additional partner and so on]****

****[CONCLUSION/SUMMARY]****

On behalf of everyone involved in .Layer, I would like to thank you for considering our proposal.

Sincerely,

Samuel Perreault