Portfolio Project Suggestions for Toronto Arts Council IT Manager Position

Executive Summary

Based on analysis of the Toronto Arts Council job posting and research into arts organization technology challenges, these 7 portfolio projects are designed to demonstrate your ability to solve real IT management problems the organization faces. Each project can be completed in one day and showcases the technical and leadership skills they're seeking.

Key Organizational Pain Points Identified

From Job Posting:
- Manual grant application processing (they specifically want "LLMs for application processing")
- Need for SmartSimple integration and CRM evaluation
- Data visualization for "open data and impact map projects"
- UX focus for "streamlining workflows"
- Microsoft ecosystem transition (Teams/SharePoint, Azure)
- System integration challenges across "technology systems and data pipelines"

From Research:
- 70% of nonprofits cite manual financial workflows as top challenge
- Grant management system integration difficulties
- Fragmented data across multiple systems
- Staff resistance to technology adoption
- Limited IT budgets requiring cost-effective solutions
- Cybersecurity vulnerabilities in donor/applicant data

Project 1: AI-Powered Grant Application Triage Dashboard

🎯 **Target Challenge:** Manual processing of 25M+ in annual grant applications

Overview

Create an interactive web application that demonstrates how AI can streamline grant application processing - exactly what TAC mentioned wanting ("LLMs for application processing").

Technical Implementation (6-8 hours)

- **Frontend:** React with Material-UI for professional dashboard interface
- **Backend:** Python Flask API with OpenAI GPT-4 integration
- **Features:**
- Upload/paste grant applications (PDF or text)
- AI analysis for eligibility screening, budget validation, completeness check
- Risk scoring based on organization history and proposal quality

- Automated category assignment and reviewer recommendations
- Export prioritized application queue

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ AI/automation expertise (job requirement)
- ✅ UX focus for workflow streamlining (job priority)
- ✅ Understanding of grant management challenges
- ✅ Modern web development skills
- ✅ Cost-effective solution mindset

Deployment

- Host on AWS/Vercel with sample Toronto arts grant data
- Include demo video showing 80% time reduction in initial application review
- Document ROI: "Could save 15+ hours/week on application processing"

Project 2: Arts Impact Visualization Platform

🎯 **Target Challenge:** "Open data and impact map projects" mentioned in job posting

Overview

Build an interactive data visualization platform that turns grant funding data into compelling impact stories for public transparency and stakeholder reporting.

Technical Implementation (6-8 hours)

- **Frontend:** React with D3.js/Plotly for interactive visualizations
- **Data Sources:** Mock Toronto neighborhood data, arts organization locations, funding amounts
- **Features:**
- Interactive map showing funded projects across Toronto neighborhoods
- Filtering by grant program, year, funding amount, art form
- Impact metrics dashboard (artists supported, audiences reached, community engagement)
- Exportable reports for board meetings and public accountability

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ Data analytics and visualization skills
- ✅ Understanding of arts council public accountability needs
- ✅ Geographic data handling (relevant for Toronto-wide programs)
- ✅ Stakeholder communication through data storytelling
- ✅ Open data initiative support

Deployment

- Public GitHub repo showing clean, documented code
- Live demo with Toronto neighborhood mapping
- Include accessibility features (WCAG compliance)
- Mobile-responsive design

Project 3: System Integration Workflow Demo

🎯 **Target Challenge:** "Seamless integration between technology systems and data pipelines"

Overview

Create a working demonstration of automated data flow between grant management, CRM, and financial systems using low-code tools (n8n/Zapier mentioned in requirements).

Technical Implementation (7-8 hours)

- **Platform:** n8n (open-source automation) hosted locally with Docker
- **Mock Systems:**
- SmartSimple-style grant application form
- Mock CRM (Airtable/simple database)
- QuickBooks-style financial tracking
- **Automated Workflows:**
- New grant application → automatically creates CRM contact
- Grant approval → generates financial tracking record
- Quarterly reporting → pulls data from all systems
- Alert notifications for deadline management

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ Low-code automation expertise (job requirement)
- ✅ System integration problem-solving
- ✅ Docker containerization skills
- ✅ Understanding of nonprofit operational workflows
- ✅ Practical cost-effective solution approach

Deployment

- Docker-compose setup for easy demonstration
- Screen recordings showing end-to-end workflows
- Documentation of time/cost savings potential
- Include error handling and monitoring

Project 4: Grant Applicant Experience Portal

🎯 **Target Challenge:** UX focus for streamlining workflows + applicant experience

Overview

Design and build a user-friendly grant application portal that reduces abandonment rates and improves data quality through better UX design.

Technical Implementation (6-8 hours)

- **Frontend:** Next.js with TypeScript for professional application
- **Features:**
- Multi-step application wizard with progress tracking
- Smart form validation with helpful error messages

- Auto-save functionality to prevent data loss
- Document upload with drag-and-drop interface
- Application status tracking portal
- Mobile-responsive design for accessibility

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ UX/UI design skills (job priority)
- ✅ Understanding of applicant pain points
- ✅ Modern web development with accessibility focus
- ✅ User-centered design thinking
- ✅ TypeScript proficiency

Deployment

- Include A/B testing framework for UX optimization
- Accessibility audit report showing WCAG compliance
- Performance metrics dashboard
- User journey mapping documentation

Project 5: IT Security Training Portal

🎯 **Target Challenge:** "Develop security policies and train staff on cybersecurity"

Overview

Build an interactive cybersecurity training platform specifically designed for arts organization staff, addressing their unique risks and workflows.

Technical Implementation (6-7 hours)

- **Platform:** React with interactive modules and quizzes
- **Content Focus:**
- Donor data protection scenarios
- Phishing attempts targeting arts organizations
- Secure file sharing for sensitive applications
- Password management for multiple arts platforms
- **Features:**
- Interactive phishing simulation
- Knowledge assessment with certificates
- Policy document management
- Incident reporting workflow

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ Cybersecurity expertise (job requirement)
- ✅ Staff training and change management skills
- ✅ Understanding of arts organization vulnerabilities
- ✅ Policy development capabilities
- ✅ Engagement-focused learning design

Deployment

- Include real Toronto arts organization case studies
- Gamification elements to encourage completion
- Progress tracking for management oversight
- Mobile-friendly for flexible learning

Project 6: Budget vs Impact Analytics Dashboard

🎯 **Target Challenge:** Financial oversight for $25M+ annual distribution

Overview

Create a real-time financial dashboard that connects grant funding to measurable community impact, helping leadership make data-driven decisions about arts investment.

Technical Implementation (6-8 hours)

- **Backend:** Python with Pandas for data processing
- **Frontend:** Streamlit or Dash for rapid dashboard development
- **Features:**
- Budget allocation tracking across art forms and neighborhoods
- ROI calculation based on audience reach and community engagement
- Variance analysis and forecasting
- Grant performance scoring and recommendations
- Board-ready executive summary reports

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ Financial data analysis skills
- ✅ Business intelligence and reporting
- ✅ Understanding of nonprofit accountability needs
- ✅ Executive-level communication through data
- ✅ Predictive analytics capabilities

Deployment

- Interactive demo with Toronto arts funding scenarios
- Export functionality for board presentations
- Real-time data refresh capabilities
- Cost-benefit analysis documentation

Project 7: Microsoft 365 Migration Planning Tool

🎯 **Target Challenge:** Teams/SharePoint implementation and Azure evaluation

Overview

Build a comprehensive migration planning and assessment tool that helps organizations transition from legacy systems to Microsoft 365 ecosystem - directly addressing TAC's current needs.

Technical Implementation (7-8 hours)

- **Platform:** PowerApps connected to SharePoint backend
- **Assessment Features:**
- Current system inventory and dependency mapping
- Migration timeline and risk assessment
- Staff training needs analysis
- Cost-benefit calculation
- Change management workflow tracking
- **Integration Demos:**
- Teams/SharePoint collaboration setup
- Power Automate workflows for grant processing
- Azure AD security configuration

Key Demonstrations

- ✅ Microsoft ecosystem expertise (job requirement)
- ✅ Change management and planning skills
- ✅ Understanding of migration challenges
- ✅ Low-code Power Platform proficiency
- ✅ Strategic IT planning capabilities

Deployment

- Include TAC-specific use cases and workflows
- Risk mitigation strategies documentation
- Staff adoption timeline and training materials
- Success metrics tracking framework

Implementation Strategy & Next Steps

Recommended Priority Order

1. **Project 1 (AI Grant Triage)** - Directly addresses their stated AI automation need
2. **Project 3 (System Integration)** - Shows practical solution to their integration challenges
3. **Project 2 (Impact Visualization)** - Demonstrates understanding of their open data goals

Portfolio Presentation Approach

- **GitHub Portfolio:** Clean, documented repositories for each project
- **Live Demos:** Host 2-3 key projects on cloud platforms
- **Video Walkthroughs:** 3-5 minute demos showing real-world usage
- **ROI Documentation:** Quantify time/cost savings for each solution
- **Case Study Format:** Present each as solving specific TAC challenges

Cover Letter Integration

Mention 1-2 specific projects that directly solve problems mentioned in job posting:

> "I've developed an AI-powered grant triage system that could reduce TAC's application processing time by 80%, and created system integration workflows using n8n that seamlessly connect grant management, CRM, and financial systems - directly addressing the challenges you've outlined."

These projects demonstrate not just technical skills, but strategic thinking about arts organization challenges and practical, implementable solutions that provide immediate value.