

To the

PYTHON SOFTWARE FOUNDATION



psf-grants@python.org
safety cc to grants-discuss@python.org

Dear python aficionados,
with greetings,
here is our reponse to your 2004 call for proposals:

Yale University Club
in Germany e.V.



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and
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GRANT PROPOSAL

to assist the development of an open source,
easily replicated, extendable

" Virtual Conferencing Center "

(e.g. for hosts of, and participants at, Model United Nations conferences
among universities, among schools and between universities and schools.)

Summary:

We have for this project the equivalent of US\$ 9,000 in our German bank account,
dedicated to strengthening international educational cooperation including planning and
participating in conferences.

We request a matching grant from you of US\$ 9,000,

to enable

-- Python aficionados to consult on developing the technical architecture for "Virtual
Conferencing Centers" with us, and with the hosts and participants in a sequence of
conferences in the next 12 months,
-- and for python language programming of two implementations.

and to produce

an open source package consisting of technical architecture templates for virtual
conferencing centers and a KISS (keep it simple, silly) basic implementation of a Virtual
Conferencing Center that diverse hosts of conferences can easily install and operate to
support and enhance their conferences, and a more experimental development version.

Indication of Payment schedule (details below):

We would appreciate:

10% at project start.

40% at mid-term, with partial delivery and evaluation

50% following completed project package delivery.

Some context, some background, and more specifics:

a. About the object of this project

Along with the specific deliverable product, our goal is to help diversify and broaden the use of open source software (and "the commons" generally), also in view of exciting developments but also difficulties in current patent law negotiations. ⁱ

The Yale University Club in Germany is a local non-profit entity, with formal ties to Yale, which is also a non-profit. From my background (initially computers then philosophy) I find "ontological" diversity also in the economy important. In terms of (ontological) forms of property, it is important that there be strong private non-profit entities, and a thriving commons, along with private for-profit entities and public (governmental) entities. All can help create value -- although there are different kinds of "value", like valuable educational material, or valuable research. One question is where is it true, and where not true, that "the more you share, the more you have".

We can share the deliverable object of this project. I trust we also share broad objectives.

The immediate practical background for this proposed project by the Yale Club here is that we helped start and host a small educational "youth camp" with a big name: a "Virtual United Nations" camp in the internet www.vun.org ⁱⁱ
Some of the initial input for that came from The Model United Nations Team at Yale. They conducted a "futures-workshop" at our request on ways to use the internet to extend the state of the art of Model United Nations conferencing.

Concretely, some small experiments have been conducted with ZOPE, php Wiki, Twiki and now especially with python MoinMoinWiki to find developable tools for collaboration in the site. So we would like to develop "virtual conferencing center" software for our site, but which also can be easily installed and operated by a diverse and broad number of universities, schools and others, especially NGOs, who host conferences.

One additional background point: I once helped operated a small publishing house in Austin, Texas, the Armadillo Press. (Ink on paper, and on us.) I follow the publishing industry, and am most interested in "participatory publishing".

So we have come to notice, as you might well guess, that there are characteristics of Model United Nations conferencing, and characteristics of "participatory publishing", for which "wikis" are most interesting.

Important for us is that for conference hosts interested in achieving a result -- a state of the art position paper, or a negotiated solution to a problem -- wikis can sure help people get on the same page, focusing on the same text. Furthermore, usually the participants at Model UN conferences are those who get there. There are cost constraints. It can be interesting if the people who participate are genuinely "delegates" from their home institution, and in consultation with their home base during the conference. That can expand interestingly the participation. For participatory publishing, wikis can help focus on the same page, or at least same table of contents, and broaden geographical participation, say on developing educational material.

But, having said all the above to let you know where we are coming from, and however good wikis are, there is a problem.

I am now getting to the core, the central priority, of the object of this proposal.

It is one thing to build a long-term community of people interested in working together. And I am all for such efforts.

But it is quite another thing to hold a one-time conference, with busy people.

A "Virtual Conferencing Center" that is of real help to conference hosts, and participants, needs to have an easy interface -- preferably a navigable graphic representation of the conference center and its functions -- both for the host installing and maintaining the conference, and for participants.

The core object and deliverable product of this project is the architecture and an initial implementation of an easy to use and replicate Virtual Conferencing Center with a navigable graphical interface for the conference. This needs to be easy for busy people to use before, during and after a specific conference. And a help in collaborative publishing, with participants' review, of conference results.

Of course it could also be used for "pure" internet conferences. But our priority goal is use by a diverse and geographically broad number of conference hosts and participants.

And be  .

This can be done, and very cost-efficiently, with the funds we have if matched by you.

More concretely, there are four kinds of architecture needed, and two python implementations. That brings us to point b:

b. What precisely the funds are needed for:

While we here can work on conferences and bring in our experiences, none of us are python programmers. Help. I did work for IBM, once upon a time, long, long ago. (And did the original hand html at www.vun.org.) I do know and have talked about this proposed project with some fine python aficionados and experienced programmers in Berlin.

We need your matching funds to do the following:

Four kinds of architecture are needed:

1. The technical architecture for a python implementation, with a prioritized ToDo list.
2. The architecture of the conference, in the form of a navigable graphic representing the conference center, as an interface for the host of the conference. (Note that this can also be a "template" in the sense of a graphic that can be easily modified by hosts of different conference.)
3. A version of that for participants.
4. And one minor point: Something that is not exactly an "architecture drawing" but is a quick introduction and improved help pages for busy people to start to work "inside" a Wiki editing page -- formatting etc., and especially ways to develop structures in the delightfully (or maybe confusingly) wide open space of a Wiki. (This is not a big deal -- there are Wiki help pages -- but I have sure experienced some head shaking by intelligent busy people first trying to write complicated content. A Wiki does avoid rigid hierarchies, but is subject to vast suburban sprawl.)

Two python implementations:

1. A simple, generic and ready to use VCC
2. A development version, with a few more features and experiments. This will be accessible, hosted by us. After that and for the longer term we will see if it may be appropriate to add it to, or migrate it to MoinMoinWiki, or to you, or to sourceforge, for example.

Here, if the grant is approved,

(a) we will first talk with python aficionados in Berlin who are willing and able to commit to working over 12 months with us. These should be people with whom we can talk and who can attend (parts of) conferences in Berlin and talk with the hosts and participants. We will negotiate a modest number of hours and honorarium with at least two people.

(b) Furthermore, after opening the VCC development site with a description of the project and some first content, we will do general outreach. And we will directly contact a few people who have an expert overview (is that possible, ho ho) of what is "out there", and can point us to what features, modules etc. are available or being worked on that are of relevance. We will negotiate with at least two who would commit over 12 months.

Architecture consultation budget: 4 x US\$ 1,000 = US\$ 4,000

50% payable at mid-term, with mid-term evaluation,
the other half upon project completion.

Python programming for the two implementations. We are having difficulties estimating this.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our best judgment is:

We cannot begin programming work until after we have the basic architecture, and after we have then seen what programming is already available.

A basic consideration is that we will be using, building upon, adding features for python MoinMoinWiki. That is already very good. Our priority is to develop the architecture and then see what a possible implementation of a graphic interface would be, and with what features.

Our current best estimate is that we will dedicate half of the programming budget to a "simple" implementation, and half to the development implementation with more features and experiments.

As soon as possible, and at the latest by the mid-term evaluation, we should have a clear and reliable estimate of what is possible for a simple implementation, and how much can be dedicated to the development version. In any case actual programming for the development version can only start after a functional simple version is delivered. We hope this sounds reasonable to you. Our budgeting is "necessarily fuzzy", but we have built in a mid-term evaluation and there are safety adjustments possible. (At least a basic implementation seems guaranteed, and then hopefully a development version with exciting aspects.)

Python programming budget: 2 x US\$ 2,000 = US\$ 4,000
(50% payable upon delivery of basic implementation,
50% upon delivery of development version.)

A last point of content:

We would like to hold US\$ 1,000 of the python funding for two special "high-level" consultations towards the end of the project.

As indicated earlier, a starting point for our consideration of conferencing is "Model United Nations" conferences among university students. VCCs can assist and enhance that, extending the state of the art.

But furthermore, I think intensely that that can also be used as a significant research tool.

Say that university students with faculty coaching, at various universities conduct a conference not just to "play diplomats" but to achieve a negotiated solution to a given problem. The result is then their best judgment on the issue.

Then it is possible to compare and contrast that result to the "real" result or state of negotiations at the UN, or other real international venue on the issue.

If there is a difference, then there can be an interesting research question.

And an information basis and tool for further collaborative work on that research question.

Toward the end of the project we would like the possibility of consulting with python aficionados on that use as a research tool, and possibly plan an experimental use.

Special budget item for python consultations: US\$ 1,000

TOTAL proposed python budget of US\$ 9,000

Matching our project budget of US\$ 9,000

c+d. Our work, work plan, and Delivery and Payment plans:

For our part, and with the US\$ 9,000 in our account, which we will dedicate to this project if you meet our friendly challenge and match the funding:

We will help plan and participate in a sequence of conferences in Berlin during the next 12 months.

Our focus will be to use Wiki software as an experimental adjunct to the conferences, as conference support. And we will consult with the conference hosts and some participants about their experience and suggestions. This will help to develop the architecture if we can also involve python aficionados over the sequence of conferences.

We will use our funds for the "academic" side of the conference planning and participation (and minor communications costs).

We have had provisional talks with a range of possible partners. Here we mention:

- An initial university-university teleconference, here at the Free University of Berlin on October 14th. Visit www.facetofacedialogue.org
- A conference on the economy and factors that enhance or inhibit innovation and "value creation" hosted by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, extending a recent conference they hosted on "Open Innovation", including open source programming and patent rights. Visit www.boell.de
- This year the Yale Club here will be giving the "Yale Book Award" to the John. F. Kennedy high school here, for excellence in international education efforts, especially their Model United Nations program. We can conduct a special futures-workshop with them. They host an annual MUN conference usually with some 300 students from numerous countries. We would need a very robust VCC to handle that. We want to get to that point by the end of the project. For the project development we are considering an extensive "Futures-Workshop" with them on their experiences with such conferences, and on their brainstorming about what kind of MUN conferences they might envision, with python powered VCC support, when they get to college.

There is no lack of interesting international conferences in Berlin. If you match our funds with your grant, we will focus on python VCC development, and negotiate specifics of conference planning, cooperation and conference cost sharing, including the costs of the host's staff time for post conference consultations with us and python aficionados.

With conference experience in Germany we think that our US\$ 9,000 is an adequate sum for cost-effective interesting results, both in terms of architecture development and for introducing python powered Conference Support to a range of actors with potential. We are "putting our money where our mouth is" on this. And it is also a fact that just now that is all we have in our account dedicated to strengthening international education. (I am the treasurer and should know. Greetings to Neal Norwitz.)

We have already indicated our work plan, and delivery and payment plan. Here a summary:

Time	Delivery	Payment
Start: 1 November 2004		US\$ 1,000
Mid-term 15 April	Initial architecture simple VCC programmed	US\$ 2,000 US\$ 2,000
End 30 October 2005	full architecture development VCC programmed	US\$ 2,000 US\$ 2,000

Comments:

Initial payment is a "good faith" payment to indicate that the project is running and start of work. That amount will be dedicated to the special python consultations towards the end of the project.

As stated in the text, there will be a mid-term evaluation. While we hope the simple VCC programming will be done, that can only start after the basic architecture is done and ToDos prioritized. By mid-term we should at least have a detailed sense of the basic VCC programming. In any case payment is only on delivery.

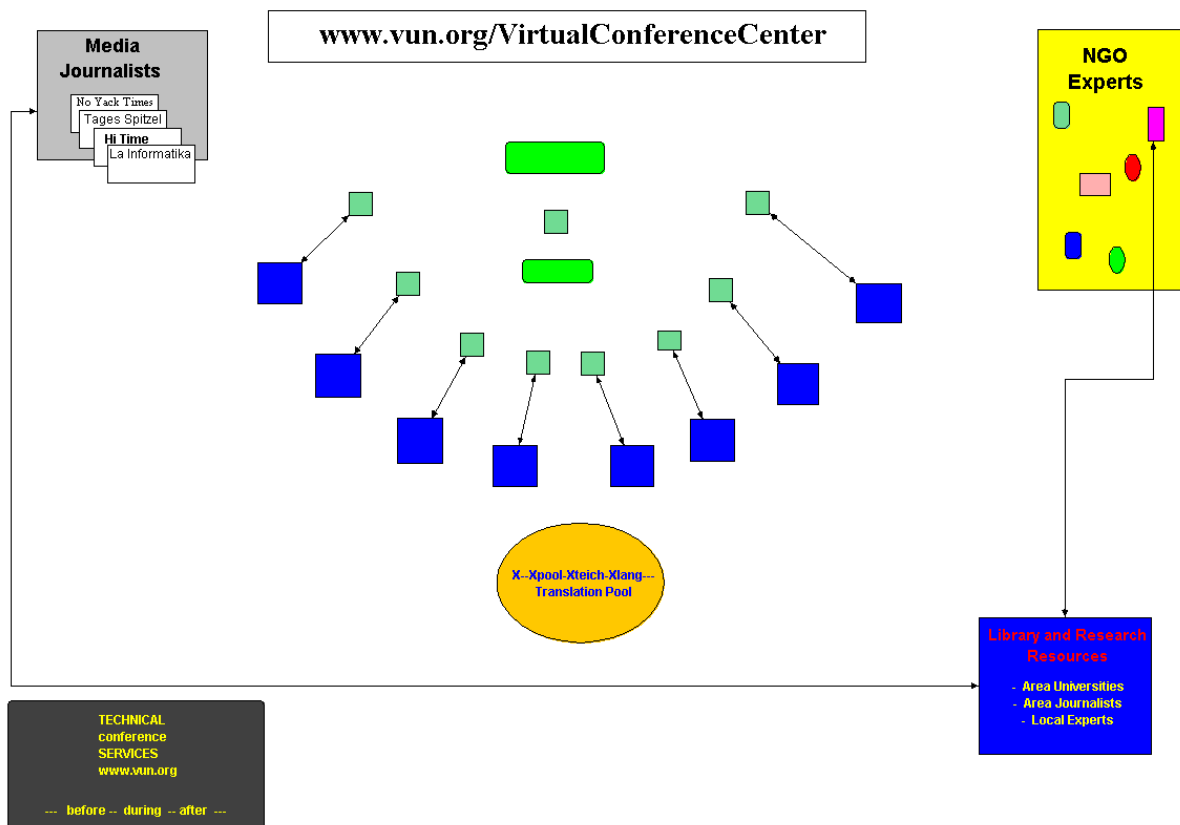
We hope you can match our funds.

This could be exciting, and hopefully the beginning of an interesting relationship.

Regards,
for now, and for the future

via email
David MacBryde
Yale University Club in Germany
Call if you wish. +49 30 822 9625

Below I will paste in one simple architecture sketch, usable as a discussion starter. Included here with the hope that you find the project interesting and reasonable.



i A recent conference here in Berlin, Germany, focused on the economy and "open source" and "the commons", and in particular on current intense patent law negotiations in Germany, in the EU, and in UN contexts The conference was hosted by the Heinrich-Boell Foundation www.boell.de There are exciting developments, but also some urgency to create as many "facts on the ground" as possible and broad use and appreciation of open source.

ii The start-up financing was achieved in the context of "turning swords into ploughshares" as a small part of a large European Union project to convert former military facilities to civilian use. The small educational project was developed in the context of moving from militarized confrontation to civil communication. Currently the project is still small, involving mostly small local youth projects in the Berlin area in a context of considerable turmoil in local school budgets. The schools are now equipped with computers, and teachers/administrators are now gaining competence. We see a large potential use in the near and medium term in Berlin, and from Berlin internationally. For www.vun.org we need the collaborative software of a Virtual Conferencing Center, and will install a copy for our use.

iii As indicated above, we are not python programmers and do not personally know how much work is required for what result. I have talked, non-committally and in general terms to some programmers.

In any case we first need to work on the architecture, and see what is already available in order to priorities a ToDo list.

AND in any case we have built in a mid-term evaluation of project progress and reality check.