



The Vienna Choral Society: Communication and Grant-Writing Assistance Internship

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One Week of Work: The Vienna Choral Society Communication Internship

The week of October 29, my supervisor, Ms. Baliga, tasked me with proofreading the VCS grant proposal for the Dominion Energy 2018 ArtStar Award grant. In addition to proofreading, I read VCS yearly operations and grant proposal documents. I also communicated with Ms. Baliga and her peers via email to prepare our application for Dominion's ArtStar Award. For the proofreading assignment, I read through the full VCS grant proposal to Dominion. I fixed grammar and spelling errors throughout the text, and I suggested modified sentence structures. By doing this, I learned more about VCS' writing style, future goals for improved concerts and arts education programs, yearly operations, and organizational structure. This assignment showed me how VCS writes grant proposals and interacts with its potential grant-makers, which range from the Dominion Energy utility company to the Arts Fairfax local arts agency.

Reflections and Lessons Learned From One Week of Class Lectures and Course Readings

For the week of October 29, the Public and Professional Writing Internship class read Steps 37 and 99 in our textbook. We reviewed this content in class lectures and group discussions. Eric Woodard confirms in Step 37 out of 100 in our class textbook, *The Ultimate Guide to Internships*, that in interviews, internship and job candidates should prepare key messages that they need to get across to the interviewer. The candidate should incorporate these messages politely, appropriately, and clearly into answers to the interviewer's questions. This relates to writing grant proposals. While each grant uses a different structure and asks its own specific questions, a grant-writer should always communicate key messages about the value and positive impact of his or her organization. A strong grant proposal should have at least one running theme. VCS's teaching choir mission serves as a running theme in its grant proposals, for example.

In Step 99 out of 100, Woodard agrees that internship and job applicants should network, form professional relationships, and attend in-person meetings instead of just applying for jobs online. Grant-writing works the same way. You need to know the potential grant-makers in your field and connect with them to increase the chance of winning a grant. This highly competitive field leads to more rejections than acceptances, so forming professional connections allows grant-writers to better understand what specific features grant-makers look for in an organization, what kinds of programs they prefer to fund, and how to tailor your organization's message to best match the grant-maker's goals.

In the October 29 class lecture, we explored interviews in depth, touching on internship interviews, job interviews, exit interviews, and informational interviews. The lectures explained that informational interviews often improve your understanding of that organization while providing you with a stronger professional connection to that company in case you want to apply for a job or internship there. You should also send thank-you notes by email and postal mail after every interview and meeting that your contacts provide, because it shows your manners, your passion for that field, and your ability to develop and maintain professional relationships.

Reflections and Lessons Learned In This Internship So Far: What You Should Know

The Communication and Grant-Writing Assistance Internship with the Vienna Choral Society provides you with an excellent opportunity to better understand how a performing arts organization works. You learn about everything from the grant-writing process and what the prominent local grant-makers are like to how to best communicate with the organization's members, audiences, supporters, and partners.

VCS generates a positive impact on its community through entertaining and enriching concerts and arts education programs. So, interns gain experience in the management of two sides of the performing arts – concerts and arts education. This experience opens the door to careers in both of those aspects of arts management, and it remains relevant for other fields, including education administration, program management, event management, communications, networking, grant-writing, marketing and promotional writing, and fundraising and organizational development.

This internship's flexible hours and work methods allow you to work remotely, communicate with your supervisor over the phone and by email, and take on tasks that touch on different facets of the organization. As a long-standing and popular community chorus, VCS also helps its interns and employees get to know other important and impactful community organizations through its strong network of professional contacts. That provides valuable connections for future internships and jobs elsewhere in the community.