

Lovisa Carlvik  
Susan Berston  
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# Honors Project Final Write Up

## Introduction

This project aimed to assist the Global Fund for Women (GFW) and their Vanguard Council in the planning, promoting and hosting of their 8th Annual Art Live Lounge fundraising event. This event, for the last 7 years, has raised money for grants that will go directly to grassroots organizations that support women around the world. The Vanguard Council which hosts the event every year has done a fantastic job, though the stress that they all felt leading up to last years even meant that they were excited to get assistance. I am very thankful that I receive the opportunity to work so closely with the truly inspirational women at the GFW and the Vanguard Council on such an important event.

## Contact Information

While at the Global Fund for Women office I worked with both Renee Saedi and Noura Bou Zeid. I worked under their direction with projects being assigned to me throughout the event planning process. However, I was self-managed for the most part in when and how I completed these tasks. Both Renee and Noura were very welcoming and thankful for my assistance. We had a very professional though friendly relationship, as I knew Renee from a mutual friend who is on the Vanguard Council. We communicated mainly through email to plan when I would be coming into the office. The contact information for both Renee and Noura is listed below.

### **Renee Saedi- Donor Stewardship Officer**

rsaedi@globalfundforwomen.org

+1.415.248.4851

pronouns: she/her

### **Noura Bou Zeid- Development Associate**

nbouzeid@globalfundforwomen.org

+1.415.248.4830

pronouns: she/her

## Expectations vs. Result

Going into this project I was very excited to learn more about how a grant based nonprofit works and how it differs from nonprofits which run more like a normal business. In the past, I have worked in management for the nonprofit organization Hostelling International, where I had learned a great deal about event planning and fundraising. However, those events and any scholarships and grants we gave out were funded by the hostel's profits. Therefore I was looking forward to learning how you can host a fundraising event with no income other than donations from businesses and donors.

I expected going into this project that I would mainly end up working on simple office projects at the GFW, such as printing promotional material, mailing thank you notes, etcetera. I did not expect to be so involved in an actual fundraising event nor to be in direct contact with businesses in regards to donations and sponsorships. I thought that most of the new knowledge I would attain would be from questions I posed to the GFW staff and not from the hands-on experience that I ended up receiving. I thought that if I would be doing any actual fundraising myself it would be in small amounts selling raffle tickets, I did not expect to raise over \$1300 in donations before the event even started. Once the project had already started and the types of tasks I would be completing became more clear my expectations did change and I started to set higher goals for myself.

Some tasks I wish that I would have devoted more time to, such as trying to sell more tickets. Once I had started I expected to be able to promote the event more and to personally sell more tickets. I did go around to some businesses with promotional material but in the end, only a few were willing to post the material in their store. It was also difficult to sell tickets to my friends and fellow students as the ticket price was quite high and the event more targeted towards career driven individuals. Although it was difficult to get businesses to openly support the event in their brick and mortar stores, they were often more than willing to make some form of donation, such as the in-kind donations for the raffle prizes. This experience taught me that its always worth it to ask.

During the planning of the event, it was at times difficult to see the forest through the trees. Although we were always on track compared to previous years, many people still felt stressed over getting everything together in time. With the focus being on the to-do list, we were always looking at the individual things that needed to get done instead of seeing how far we have already come. When the day of the event came I was blown away by beautiful the event ended up being and how smoothly everything ran. While only the day before I had been trying to figure out how we were even going to mount the art. In the end, the Vanguard Council were able to get everything they wanted for the event including a live aerialist.

Overall I feel that my expectations were met and exceeded. The amount of involvement in the actual and event planning that I had was much more than I ever expected it to be. The women at GFW and the Vanguard Council were so welcoming and were happy to educate me on feminist activism and fundraising. The members of the Vanguard Council held jobs in all sorts of fields and on all levels but had come together to try to actively create a change in this world for women and that was truly inspiring.

### Skills Utilized

I expected the experience of working for a grant based nonprofit to be very different from running a business like nonprofit, however, I ended up using many of the same skills. The most important skill I used was proper communication. The variety of people I was communicating meant that the style of my communication needed to be adjusted accordingly. When first approaching businesses I would make sure that my correspondence was formal and educational so that the message would be as clear as possible to the receiver. If the message I received back was friendly and less formal, I would make sure to respond in a similar matter. As the businesses that I was in contact with ranged from comedy clubs to museums, the correspondence I had with them varied greatly.

Furthermore, I was also working on preparing communications for the Vanguard Council in the form of social media post ideas, ticket promotion emails and other documents that they would be using to sell tickets and get donors. To do so I used my marketing and formatting skills on top of my writing skills. Utilizing my networking skills was how I was able to even get connected with the GFW and have the ability to volunteer with them as it is not something they have not done in the past.



Throughout the planning of the event, organizational skills were very important. There were many things that needed to be completed in order for this event to take place and thankfully many people to do them. However, this also meant that unless you were organized it was hard to know what had already been done and by whom. To keep duplicate working being done I made sure to monitor the spreadsheets that we were using and identifying where any follow-up needed to happen. For example, if a business had agreed to make a donation and we had not heard from them in a while, I would check in with their person of contact to see if I could follow up for them. Organizational skills also came in handy to keep track of all the physical things we needed for the event such as the art, food, tables, banners, and in-kind donations. I also needed to make sure that everything was ready and organized before the day of the event so that it could easily be transported and set up.

Interestingly my crafting skills were also readily used. The raffle baskets themselves needed to be put together and made to look as luxurious as they were (some were valued above \$1000). The art needed to be mounted in a way that would not disturb the art nor the wall that they were to hang on (see photo above). With my creativity, I was able to come up with different and effective solutions for each piece.

While this experience was truly unique I felt that I was able to utilize many skills that I have already learned in my previous jobs. Although previously I had felt that putting on a fundraising event such as this one was not something that I would necessarily be able to do yet, this experience really showed me that I am ready and want to do more things like this in the near future.

## Deliverables

The task which I spent the most time on prior to the day of the event was in-kind donation requests. At first, it was somewhat intimidating to contact businesses asking them to donate their products, but the more I did it the easier it became. In the end, I ended up contacting close to 100 businesses and we had more donations than any of the previous years. Below is a list of the donations we receive from businesses where I was the sole contact person. I also assisted in following up on other donations and making sure they were received at the GFW office.

Business	Donation Type	Value
Lucky Strike	Gift certificate for a social party for 7	\$350
Rinse	Laundry services	\$100
Birdies	Gift card	\$120
SF MoMA	1-year dual membership,	\$180
Berkeley Repertory Theatre	2 ticket vouchers	\$160
Punch Line SF	10 tickets	\$250
New Parkway Theater	5 tickets	\$50
Bluestone Lane	Gift card	\$50
Mission Cliffs Mission	2 climbing passes	\$70
Delfina	Gift card	\$100

In the end, the event ended up raising a total of \$22,383 that will be able to fund at least 2 grants for the upcoming year. Most of that can be attributed to the hard work by the fantastic women in the Vanguard Council, but I am very happy to know that I was a part of it too. Here is a breakdown of the amounts raised:

- ❖ Tickets: \$13,050 Presale + \$780 at the door = \$13,830
- ❖ Sponsorships: \$1,000 (\$500 each - fuseproject and Circle medical)
- ❖ Donations: \$1,600
- ❖ Silent Auction: \$2,810
- ❖ Raffle: \$1,670 CC + \$1,223 Cash = \$2,893
- ❖ Late add - \$250 from GeoEx
- ❖ Total: \$22,383

## What I Learned

The biggest lesson that I have learned from this project is that I can do it. Whatever “it” is, whatever I want to do, I can do it if I set my mind to it. I have always wanted to do more to support women and work on fundraising events, but I didn't think that I was anywhere near being ready to do it. Being pushed out of my comfort zone showed me that all the skills that I have already have and the things I am learning in school now, have given me a great tool kit to make incredible things happen. All I need to add is a little bravery and a willingness to try. Anything that I did not know I could easily learn by asking a few questions and doing some research.

I was able to each week make connections between what we were learning in class to what was going on at the GFW office. The week we were discussing accounting I approached the accountant at GFW. I asked if they had time to tell me about how the accounting procedures at a nonprofit is different from a profit-driven business and they were more than happy to do so. At the GFW they needed to keep an even more detailed log of where exactly all the money was going. Not just to make sure as much money as possible can go to those in need, but also to be able to prove that they are maintaining their promises. Each item had to be logged into an general account in the ledger, but then again into a sub account. For example, where I might previously have put printer paper into an office supplies account, they needed to log it as office supplies, and then printing supplies. They meticulously tracked all their spending to be able to pinpoint exactly where they could save more money and fuel more of it into grants.

As someone interested in working in nonprofit management or for a corporation focusing on business ethics, social responsibility and diversity inclusion this was truly a great experience for me. Though I found it interesting that even at GFW, who is doing so much good, also faced ethical questions pertaining to social responsibility. For example, while I was there I was surprised to learn that they would not accept donations from just anyone. Businesses that were not in line with their values could not make contributions, such as tobacco and oil companies. Caterpillar (CAT) produces logging equipment that is responsible for a great deal of deforestation and the destruction of the homelands of some of the grassroots organizations supported by GFW. CAT was conducting an employee giving program where they would match any donations their employees made and many of them wanted to donate to the GFW. The GFW had to decide whether they should bypass their rules and accept these donations as they were requested to made by the individual employees. In the end, they decided that because people have been able to make similar donations in the past by simply giving the employees the money to donate they should not deny these people the same opportunity just because the way their system is set up is slightly different. They will, however, continue to not accept large corporate direct donations from companies such as CAT.

While making the raffle baskets, I learned an important lesson about inclusion and the unconscious stereotypes we all have. We decided to use women in television as inspiration with each basket contained prizes which that tv character would enjoy. We had selected, categorized the prizes and started to assemble the baskets when we realized that there was only one representation of a person of color and no LGBTQ representation. Even though we saw ourselves as very inclusive and had several members of different races and ethnicities present we still unconsciously subscribed to the stereotypes of our society. It taught me a difficult lesson that even though it hurts to admit that

we might make such a mistake it is important to acknowledge it and to actively work to make a change. In the end, we redid all the baskets to get equal representation of race, ethnicity and sexual orientation, even though it was difficult because of under-representation in television.

This project taught me so much through each phase. I learned to push myself and to break out of my comfort zone to find a volunteering opportunity. While planning the event I learned to utilize my organizational and networking skills to accomplish things that I didn't think I was capable of doing yet. Throughout learning important lessons about self-awareness, social responsibility and handling difficult ethical issues. I wish that I could have learned more about how the GFW is really managed, though I think that will come with time as I am looking to continue to volunteer with them.

I was thankful that there were examples of projects from previous years. It helped me have an idea of what kind of volunteer opportunities to look for. When I first looked I felt somewhat lost searching through many simple volunteer jobs trying to find one that was administrative/ business related. I ended up being very lucky being able to find such a good opportunity through my network.

Although this project might have been intimidating at first, I think it has truly been an enriching experience and much better than writing another research essay. This whole experience ended up being a great networking event and I have met some great mentors and friends as a result. An honors project should not be easy and it should push you to accomplish things above what you normally expect a class to teach you, and that is just what this project has done.





Above: Example of raffle prize  
Right: Attendees examining prizes  
Below: Raffle prize table, showing the final tv characters that we selected.

