

FOUNDATION FUNDING IN  
THE AGE OF FAKE NEWS  
By Mark Glaser

DigitalEd Training: January 25, 2017

# OVERVIEW

- Is a grant right for you?
- Research, research, research
  - Personal relationships
- Overview of major media foundations
  - Other foundations of interest
    - Tips from Foundations
    - Tips from Grantees
  - Fake news and verification

## 6 STEP PLAN

1. Have a killer idea
2. Research foundations, find the right fit
3. Make the right connections
4. Build the relationship
5. Make the pitch
6. Stick to it!

# IS A GRANT RIGHT FOR YOU?

1. Project must fit for your organization
2. Don't just fit project for a foundation
3. A very long process if you need \$ now
4. Foundations want a track record
5. Can you raise money another way?  
(Crowdfunding, investors, etc.)



# NON-PROFIT OR FOR-PROFIT

- Many foundations require non-profit status
  - Some, like Ford, will grant for-profits
    - For-profits can use fiscal sponsors
- Fiscal sponsors typically take a cut, 4% to 7%
  - Fiscal sponsors are non-profits who provide service: vouch for you

## FINDING A FIT

Most important is a fit for you, your organization and the foundation.  
No mashups that feel wrong:  
“Mission alignment”



## YOUR PROJECT

Don't rely on just grants

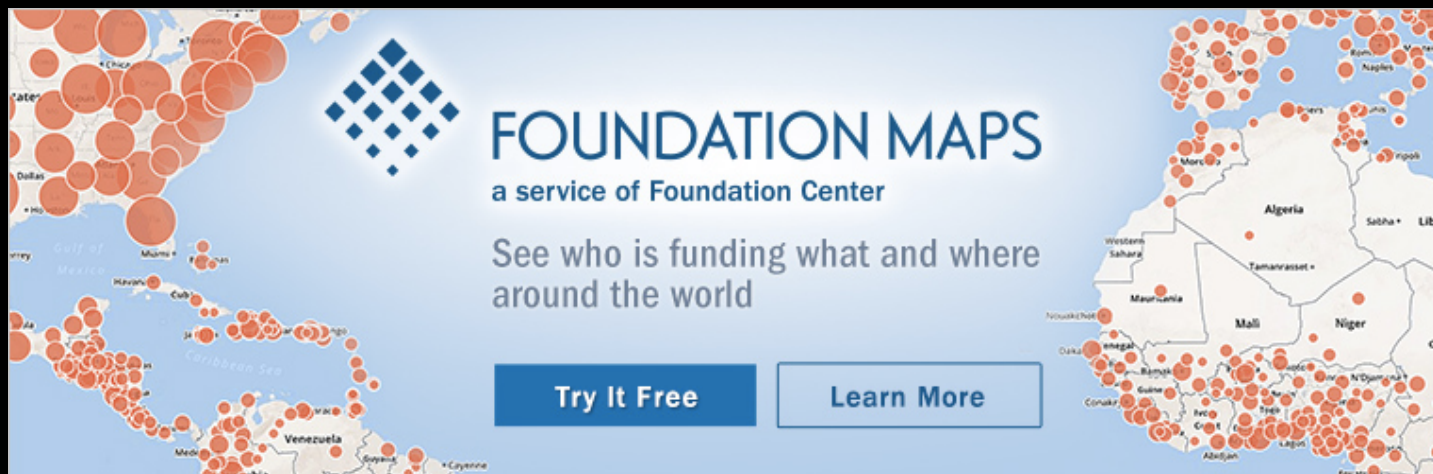
Prove you have a sustainable business model

Build a strong, reputable team

Partner, collaborate with others who have  
credibility

# RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

There are thousands of foundations  
Find the ones that fit  
Check the Foundation Center database:  
<http://foundationcenter.org/>  
Free browsing at SF Foundation Center



## FOUNDATION WEBSITES

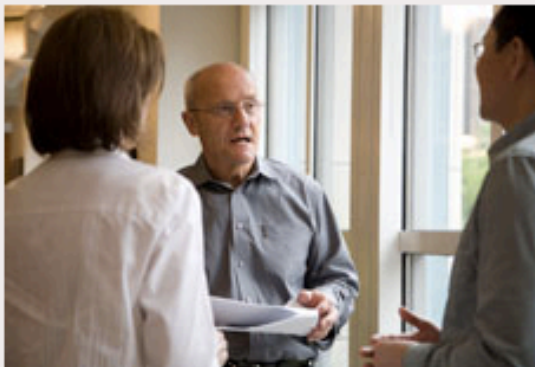
- > Obvious place to start with information
- > Check out previous grantees and projects
- > Check for news and changes in philosophy
  - > Example: Knight's "evolving strategy"

**THRIVING IN THE GRAY: HOW  
KNIGHT FOUNDATION'S  
STRATEGY IS EVOLVING IN THE  
AGE OF DISRUPTION**

TECHNOLOGY / ARTICLE

## WRITING GRANTS?

Forget about writing grants first  
First, find the right program officers,  
contacts



**Geoffrey Lamb**

CHIEF ECONOMIC AND POLICY  
ADVISOR,  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE



**Leigh Morgan**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
OPERATIONS



**Trevor Mundel**

PRESIDENT,  
GLOBAL HEALTH

## PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

- > Who do you know at Foundations?
- Who do you know who knows people?
- Scour LinkedIn for shared connections
  - Get intros

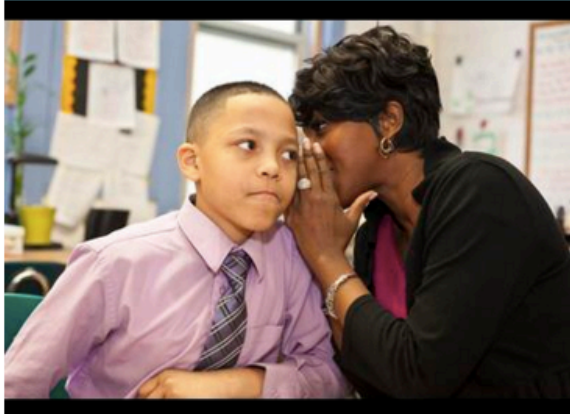


## OUTREACH TO GRANTEEES

Who got grants from that foundation?  
Do you know them?  
Get intros, war stories, issues, process

JOURNALISM / GRANT

### Virtual Classroom



JOURNALISM / GRANT

### PALEYIMPACT



JOURNALISM / GRANT

### NABJ Student Multimedia Journalism Projects





## NETWORKING AT EVENTS

HUGELY important!

Foundation events or foundation sponsored  
events

Foundation speaker at events

Don't hound them; go with natural flow

Recent Skoll Foundation event at Institute for  
the Future: sat with foundation president

## IDEA LAB, EDSHIFT GRANTS

Foundation can help you write grants  
Make the right contacts  
Build your credibility  
Partner when possible  
Start with Brief Overview



### **MEDIASHIFT: Media Impact section**

➡ Metrics, analytics and measuring impact

*Overview proposal*

## ASK FOR ADVICE NOT \$

Funder: 'I won't give you money'  
But: Wants to help in other ways  
Can you help me make connections?  
Don't start with your ask  
Build relationship over time

## END-OF-YEAR MONEY

- Good time to ask for funding: end of year!
  - Foundations must give out certain percentage of money each year
- If they have money leftover, they need to spend it!
  - Got recent grant fast because it was December

## THE LONG GAME

- > Finding the right person takes time
  - > Building a relationship takes time
    - > Building trust takes time
      - > Finding the right fit takes time
- > It can all go POOF! if someone leaves

## FORD STORY

First impression not good

BUT: proved myself over time

Stuck to my idea, partnered on event at Ford

THEN: Had my own events hosted by Ford

THEN: Received travel scholarships from Ford



FORDFOUNDATION

## PEOPLE COME AND GO

Michael Maness, Eric Newton, Marie Gilot left  
Knight

Clark Bell left McCormick

David Sasaki left Gates

Jonathan Barzilay left Ford

Josh Stearns left Dodge

## FAKE NEWS & VERIFICATION

- Post-election chaos at many foundations
  - Not clear what strategies will change
- Knight made quick "Matching Fund" pitch for various non-profit news orgs
  - Same support for independent news orgs
- Also: big influx of people asking for grants
- Have scalable idea: not just "we do great journalism, support us!"



## KNIGHT FOUNDATION

- 1) Technology Innovation (was “Media Innovation” (startups, prototypes)
  - 2) Journalism (legacy media)
- New “Statement of Strategy”

[www.knightfoundation.org/statement-of-strategy](http://www.knightfoundation.org/statement-of-strategy)

Massive funding for innovation projects  
Less support now for library innovation

# KNIGHT FOUNDATION

## Key areas of interest:

- Journalism: First Amendment and “Journalistic Excellence”
- Technology Innovation: tech that runs across various grantees
- No plans for more News Challenges or Prototype Funds
- Apply here: [knightfoundation.org/apply](http://knightfoundation.org/apply)

# KNIGHT FOUNDATION

Recent Journalism Grantees:  
Quartz Bot Studio + LION  
IRE and NICAR conferences  
NAB Innovation Challenge

JOURNALISM / GRANT

## Quartz Bot Studio



JOURNALISM / GRANT

## PRI UnConvention: Transition 2016



JOURNALISM / GRANT

## Institute for NonProfit News Training and Digital Hub project



# KNIGHT FOUNDATION

Recent Innovation Grantees:  
Rhizome, BAVC and One Degree on  
preserving digital info  
AI in Public Interest: \$5 mil of \$27 mil fund

TECHNOLOGY / PRESS RELEASE

**Three projects will help  
better inform the public  
through technology  
innovation with...**

TECHNOLOGY / ARTICLE

**Supporting stronger  
libraries in the digital age**

TECHNOLOGY / ARTICLE

**AI in the public interest:  
How a new fund will  
advance the ethics of  
artificial intel...**



# KNIGHT FOUNDATION

## Key Program Managers in Journalism: Jennifer Preston (former NYT) Shazna Nessa Karen Rundlet



**Jennifer Preston**  
VP/Journalism



**Shazna Nessa**  
Director of Journalism



**Karen Rundlet**  
Journalism Program Officer

# KNIGHT FOUNDATION

## Key Program Managers in Media Innovation: John Bracken (former MacArthur)



**John Bracken**

VP/Technology Innovation



**Chris Barr**

Director of Technology Innovation



**Hallie Atkins**

Technology Innovation Associate



**Eva Pereira**

Technology Innovation Associate

Chris Barr  
Hallie Atkins  
Eva Pereira

## KNIGHT FOUNDATION TIPS

From Grantee:

- > Develop relationships with Knight staff
- > Find folks who Knight staff trust to validate you and your idea.
- > Knight is more risk-appreciative than any substantial foundation out there.
- > Talk to current and former Knight grantees, most of them are wonderful folks.

## KNIGHT FOUNDATION TIPS

From Program Officer:

“For Knight, clarity in terms of the activities of the project, and specificity on the types of people served by the project, are key.”

- Want to see societal impact
- Knight has had most success with small non-profit startups with tech angle



# FORD FOUNDATION

Major Reorganization at end of 2015:  
Darren Walker outlines changes, all grants  
now fall under "Challenging Inequalities"



The top of the slide features a dark grey banner with a repeating floral pattern. Centered within this banner is a white rectangular box with a thin black border containing the text "FORD FOUNDATION".

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Journalism part of Creativity & Free Expression (CFE)

### What we don't fund

Our grantmaking does not support advocacy or commissioned projects, educational initiatives or student projects, film festivals and film schools, journalism tools and technology, journalism reporting projects whose focus is outside foundation subject-matter priorities, stand-alone diversity initiatives, or awards, scholarships, and endowment funds.

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Changes:

- Focus on inequality
- More international grants
- Support for networks, orgs that can "move the needle" on inequality
  - More support for investigative work
  - Supports for-profits too

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Recent Grantees:

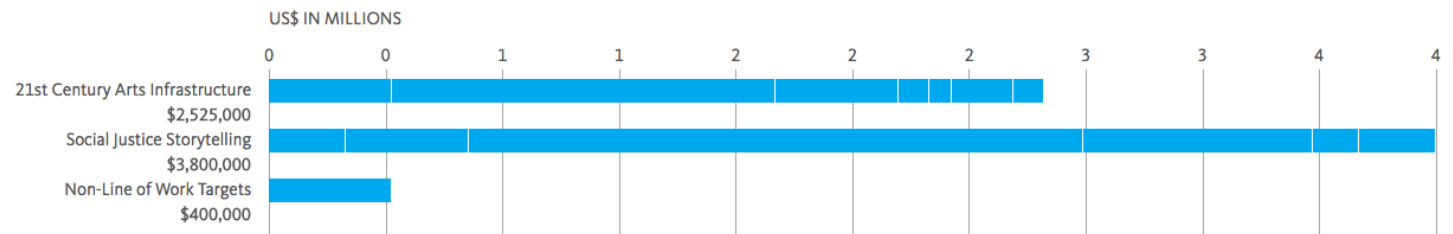
Global Investigative Journalism Network  
(\$400K)

Center for Investigative Reporting (\$400K)

WNET: "Chasing the Dream" about poverty  
(\$250K)



**Creativity and Free Expression** 14 grants totaling \$6,725,000



# FORD FOUNDATION

## Key Program Officers (Creativity & Free Expression)



**Elizabeth Alexander**  
Director, Creativity and Free  
Expression

📍 New York, USA



**Andrew Catauro**  
Manager, JustFilms

📍 New York, USA



**Dave Mazzoli**  
Grants Manager, Creativity and  
Free Expression

📍 New York, USA



**Cara Mertes**  
Director, JustFilms, Creativity  
and Free Expression

📍 New York, USA

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Key Program Officers (Creativity & Free Expression)



**Margaret Morton**

Program Officer, Creativity and  
Free Expression

📍 New York, USA



**John K. Naughton**

Grants Manager, Creativity and  
Free Expression

📍 New York, USA



**Rowena Nixon**

Senior Grants Manager,  
Education, Creativity and Free  
Expression

📍 New York, USA



**Barbara Raab**

Program Officer, Creativity and  
Free Expression

📍 New York, USA

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Questions from Program Manager:

What is your business model, and how realistic is it?

What is your strategic plan?

Do you have journalism partnerships that can elevate  
and amplify your work?

What is your strategy for audience acquisition and  
engagement?

How does your organization think about diversity?

# FORD FOUNDATION

## Tips from Program Manager:

- Keep it short – brevity is the soul of wit!
- I am so much more likely to read something that is 2-3 pages than something longer.
- It typically takes a get-to-know-you process consisting of more than one conversation to result in a grant.
- Pressure is tight on journalism budget; you might collaborate with others
  - Want solutions to problems that scale



# MCCORMICK FOUNDATION

## Journalism grants in Democracy section

1. Journalism Education
2. Professional Development
3. Audience Engagement

**Democracy** Program

Journalism



# MCCORMICK FOUNDATION

Key Program Officers:

John Sirek, Director

Janice Lombardo

Jennifer Choi (more on innovation)



# MCCORMICK FOUNDATION

## Recent Grantees:

ASNE (news literacy workshops)

Community TV Network (youth journalism training)

CJR (United States Project)

### UNITED STATES PROJECT

MONDAY, JAN 23, 2017



**Student journalists especially vulnerable to Trump's press-as-enemy rhetoric**

Jonathan Peters, **CJR**

## MCCORMICK FOUNDATION

### Tips from Jennifer Choi:

- Focus on Chicago / Illinois and local media
- Encourages an email; might intro you to others
- Do you have a lot of partners who can vouch for your work?
- Tell us how you fit in with others, how you will collaborate
- We've always supported fight against fake news, want to build trust in media

# GATES FOUNDATION

- Journalism projects support other areas:  
health + global development
- Place bets on innovative approaches to  
content + distribution
  - Focus on increasing engagement,

participation and  
IMPACT!



# GATES FOUNDATION

Key Program Officers:  
Manami Kano  
Miguel Castro



# GATES FOUNDATION

## Recent Grantees:

Solutions Journalism Network (news on education)

NPR (education, health and development reporting)

BAVC / MediaShift (MetricShift section on impact)

## GATES FOUNDATION

Tips from Miguel Castro:

We continue to work with credible news organizations to cover issues regularly or in depth.

Topics: poverty, agricultural development, eradication of diseases among many others that we believe are a priority in every society.

We have priority geographies such as Africa, India, Western Europe and the US.



# GATES FOUNDATION

More from Miguel:

We have taken the question of when and how media is impactful very seriously.

We are keen to work with organizations that have embraced questions around what value and what service they provide to their audiences, knowledge about how their audiences relate to their content.

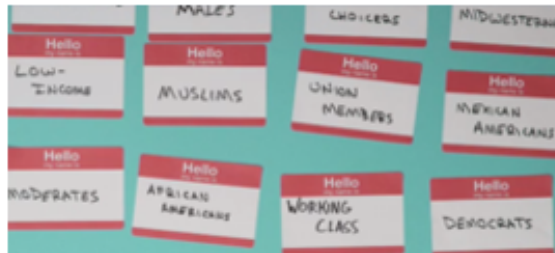
Willingness to experiment on ways to increase engagement and participation, and as a consequence, their ability to affect levels of awareness and knowledge and inform perceptions and attitudes.

# MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

## Genius Grant people



Guidance on Philanthropic  
Funding of Media and News ›



Video: Exit Poll  
Oversimplification ›



New Media and the Changing  
Nature of Civic and Political  
Activism ›

## MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

- Support for Public Media
  - Documentaries and interactive media
  - Research and innovation to support field
  - Funds non-profits and public media ONLY
  - New Civic Media push: citizen journalism and underrepresented voices
  - No unsolicited proposals, but people can send ideas to:  
[journalismandmedia@macfound.org](mailto:journalismandmedia@macfound.org)

# MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

## Key Program Officers:

Kathy Im

Lauren Pabst

Erica Twyman



# MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

## Recent Grantees:

Tow Center at Columbia (study news and social media)

Emerson College's Engagement Lab (research in civic media)

Institute for Non-Profit News (general support)

# MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

## Tips from Program Officer:

Supports nonprofit journalism organizations that conduct explanatory, investigative and enterprise reporting in the public interest.

Civic Media: looking for ways to lower barriers to participation and promote amplification of underrepresented voices and perspectives.

Have patience! The competition for MacArthur funding is high and a relatively small staff reviews a large number of requests each year.

## MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

My Visit to MacArthur:  
Why not go in person?  
Sat down for a few hours  
Made my pitch  
Learned key info on foundation's priorities  
Tends to defer to Knight for innovation

# RITA ALLEN FOUNDATION

Focus on civic engagement: tech, information  
and tools for citizens

Founded by Broadway producer



Rita Allen Foundation



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Rita Allen Foundation Foundation seeds new ideas and approaches in the field of civic engagement, believing that aware, informed and engaged citizens are our greatest assets for solving the most critical problems in our communities.



# RITA ALLEN FOUNDATION

## Recent grantees:

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### **Knight News Challenge: Elections +**

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

\$125,000

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### **Code for America Fellowship Program +**

Code for America

\$150,000

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### **Expanding TurboVote Corporate Partnerships +**

Democracy Works

\$150,000 (over 15 months)

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### **Voter's Edge +**

MapLight

\$150,000

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### **Pew Center on the States, Voting Information Project +**

Pew Charitable Trusts

\$250,000

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### **Investigating Political Nonprofits and Online Citizen Engagement Campaign +**

Center for Responsive Politics

\$150,000

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## RITA ALLEN FOUNDATION

Key program officer: Jonathan Kartt

### Tips from Jonathan:

- Typically fund early stage ideas
- Needs to have biz model beyond grants
  - Not just a cool tool
  - People in your org matter
- Fake news: thinking about making changes in next few months

# DEMOCRACY FUND

Part of Omidyar Network

New focus:

1. Engaged journalism: supporting and expanding community engagement
2. Ecosystem news: transforming local news around sustainability, collaboration and engagement

# DEMOCRACY FUND

Key program officers:  
Tom Glaisyer and Josh Stearns



## DEMOCRACY FUND

Tips from Josh Stearns:

- We want *systemic change*, not nibbling at edges
- Don't want content unless it pushes things forward
  - We do more than fund; we also connect people
- Very interested in issues around trust in media

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## OTHER FOUNDATIONS OF NOTE

Ethics and Excellence in Journalism

Open Society Foundation

Kauffman Foundation

International Women's Media Foundation

Donald W. Reynolds Foundation

Omidyar Network

Wyncote Foundation

Geraldine Dodge Foundation

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

## GENERAL TIPS FROM PROGRAM OFFICERS

- Check out the Media Impact Funders as a resource
- Make us excited about your work – show the possibilities!
  - Be smart about revenues and showing diversification
- Be positive about collaboration, especially with other grantees!

## GENERAL TIPS FROM PROGRAM OFFICERS

- Getting a “no” isn’t the final answer
- Look at who is funding similar projects as yours
- Make sure your goals and vision align with that of foundation
- How will your grant help journalism as a whole beyond your org?



## GENERAL TIPS FROM PROGRAM OFFICERS

From Molly de Aguilar, Dodge Foundation:

- Good to frame a request on election's aftermath but not just because you do journalism
- Dodge has supported local journalism in NJ, but thinking beyond that to libraries, civic tech
- Better for news orgs to look for general support rather than to "fight fake news"

## GENERAL TIPS FROM GRANTEES

- Don't lie or exaggerate. Enthusiasm and confidence are required, but not at the expense of reality.
- Respect program officers' time, they have precious little to allocate
- We never go hat in hand asking for money. We demonstrate how we can cover issues dear to them, when no one else is doing it.
- Prove to them that you are a wise investment and that you can deliver on your promises.

## GENERAL TIPS FROM GRANTEES

Tips from Robert Rosenthal, CIR

- > Be honest, clear and stick to what you know, not what you don't know or assume.
- > Never talk down your competition or others.
- > Hopefully you can make your case in person. The connection on a one-on-one basis is crucial.
  - > Time is right for bursting filter bubbles, convenings for people with diff viewpoints
- > Funders want to be relevant as assumptions change

## GENERAL TIPS FROM GRANTEES

Tips from John Clark, NAB, former UNC

- Don't try to do too much. Be specific and focused. Don't try to do everything.
- Have a plan for generating revenue. Grants should be used as a jumpstart to something bigger, so have a plan to make any grant funding go further
- This may sound odd, but think of it as a sales opportunity. You've got to "sell" yourself, your idea, your ability to the foundation.

## GENERAL TIPS FROM GRANTEES

Tips from Roger Macdonald, Archive.org

- Do research to find out about related success and failures
- For Knight, ask questions about Journalism or Innovation areas, be ambitious and sincere
  - Find others they were funded and ask for advice or a testimonial
- Don't use the term "fake news," think more about fact contextualization and how it can scale

## FOLLOWING UP

Mark Glaser

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@mediatwit

BigMarker page for Presentation

BigMarker page for Questions

Feedback on Your Idea!