

INNOVATION Fund Application Round 2

Submission Date	2014-08-29 04:56:42
Organization Name	WKAR-AM/FM/TV
Tax-exempt status	501(c)(3) organization
EIN of organization (or of fiscal sponsor's organization)	
Website address	WKAR.org
Phone Number	
Applicant's name	Gary Reid
Title:	WKAR Director of Broadcasting
Contact email	
Proposed Start Date	10-01-2014
Proposed End Date	09-30-2015
Total estimated budget for the proposed project	\$30,116.00
What is the total annual budget for your organization or, if you are a project of another organization, the total annual budget for your overall project.	\$6,599,999.00
Request amount:	\$30,116.00
In two or three sentences, describe your organization's purpose and audience.	WKAR is the public media source for mid-Michigan. We serve seventeen Michigan counties, including the state's Capital, with radio, television and online content. We are committed to serving the educational, cultural and entertainment needs of our community through network affiliation via PBS and NPR, and high quality locally produced programming coupled with active audience engagement.
Describe in detail the project for which you are requesting funds. How does it fit with your sustainability plans? Explain the need for this project, and how you expect it to increase revenue and/or audience engagement.	WKAR seeks to expand the reach of our public affairs programming with the creation of a mobile Smartphone App for 'Off The Record.' Now in its 43rd year, 'Off The Record' is Michigan's only statewide public affairs and politically based television show. Hosted by senior Capital Correspondent Tim Skubick, 'Off The Record' features in-depth interviews with politicians and business leaders from across the state. The creation of this mobile app will expand the audience, enhance the content and bring important public affairs information to a whole new audience. Located in East Lansing at Michigan State University, and

adjacent to the state capital of Michigan, WKAR is the only station in Michigan producing weekly news, public affairs and political analysis programs. 'Off the Record' is aired on all six Michigan public broadcast stations, as well as a station in Indiana. Each week at the conclusion of the shows taping, the live on-line stream, 'OTR Extra,' has garnered a large and loyal following among a diverse audience base. The success of 'OTR Extra' on-line indicates the value of 'Off The Record's' content and will form the basis for the entrance into the mobile platform.

Creating a mobile app for 'Off the Record' will engage Michigan residents with up-to-the-minute political information and give voters the information they need to make informed decisions at the polls. According to data from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, "the trend of increased voter turnout among 18 to 29 year-old's in recent Presidential elections seems to reflect a greater commitment to civic participation among young voters. At the same time, the rate of voter participation and registration among this age group remains significantly lower than that of older adults." It is essential that WKAR enter the digital mobile space to reach new audiences, and to remain connected to current members already using Smartphone's and mobile applications.

Over the years, 'Off The Record' has been very successful as a TV program, which attests to the quality of the content. By expanding the delivery of this content into a new digital platform, the reach of 'Off The Record' will be enhanced. Engaging Michigan's young voters with on demand political content via this mobile app is the first step toward increasing their turn out at the polls. Likewise, adding a younger demographic to our audience will help sustain WKAR. By delivering content on demand, and providing enhanced opportunities to donate, we will be growing our audience, and potential revenue, for the future.

Is this a new project?

New project. We have not done this before.

Who will help carry out the project? Describe the key staff and capabilities. If you plan to use outside partners, consultants, or vendors, tell us why you chose them (or how you will select them). Will you need to hire additional fulltime or part-time help to complete your proposed project?

No additional staff will be required to implement this project. Rather, various staff members will be tasked with contributing to the overall success. Two key staff members however will take the lead. On the technical side, WKAR Radio Chief Engineer will ensure quality control for content delivery and be our lead for troubleshooting, communicating with our vendor, and oversee preparation of content. The Senior Director of Development will track usage and oversee the financial implementation. With an experienced development team, WKAR will seek to increase new users and maximize underwriting opportunities. Existing communication, IT and production staff members will all have a part in the design and operation of the app.

A well-respected commercial company, JacApps, will be contracted to create and maintain the app. In business for 28 years, JacApps has created over 60 apps for commercial radio and TV, and public broadcast stations, including National Public Radio. They offer a standard app (v4) that has a variety of features and a standardized look that has been time tested. From concept to design, JacApps will work with WKAR to turn our 'OTR' content into a user-friendly

app. Our project goal is two-fold; connect Michiganders to public affair issues that affect their day-to-day lives, and provide a convenient, mobile method for our audience to become members.

How will you measure progress? Please be specific and concrete about the metrics you will use?

As in the broadcast sphere, evaluation is constant and ongoing. WKAR maintains an active comments-line via telephone and website. Listeners, viewers and on-line users routinely call or write questions and comments about our programming on a daily basis. Our staff responds on the same day if not immediately to whatever issues may arise. Folding the mobile app into this existing system will be simple and will give usability feedback on an ongoing and near-real time basis.

Given the number of different phones and tablets in the marketplace, compatibility issues are sure to arise. These concerns will be referred to our Engineering department and passed along to JacApps. Further, tracking the number of downloads, and amount of time the app is used will be reviewed monthly through an analytics company, Localytics. This information will be factored and merged with existing databases to track growth. The station's Allegiance database, which holds all audience and member data, will be enhanced to incorporate the data from Localytics. Additional source codes will be added to allow measurement of new donors, average gift value, additional gifts, and number of gifts per month and year. These metrics will be reviewed quarterly and compared internally as well as annually with our peer stations.

The ultimate test of course is whether this app is successful in better informing the electorate, and increasing engagement among the younger voter. Election turnout data will be compared pre and post app to get a sense of the potential impact on the process.

Using those metrics, what is the threshold of success for this project?

Success will be measured in three primary areas. First, has the app achieved enough publicity to be broadly used. This will be easily measured based on the number of downloads and ongoing usage. Factoring in the number of calls and email questions and comments will inform as to the frontline effectiveness of the app. User comments will inform revisions and improvements to the app.

Second, using member tracking within the Allegiance database, information will be gleaned as to the effectiveness of the app in generating additional members, and, raising additional revenue for the station.

Third, comparison of voter turnout in the critical 18-29 demographic will be factored to determine the effectiveness of our promotional ability and the broader value of providing additional information to the public.

By merging these three objectives, evaluation of the overall effectiveness will be straightforward. WKAR is prepared to adjust, modify and expand the scope of the app in response to evaluator data. Rather than assign hard numeric goals to each of the three categories, WKAR will expect to realize strong and consistent growth in all areas.

How will INN be able to validate

WKAR will provide metrics gathered through Localytics

the metrics and how the project did using those metrics?

(app/user data), Google Analytics (web data) and Allegiance (donor/financial data) to INNnovation Fund quarterly, or as requested. Likewise, measurement of voting trends will be made available from the Secretary of State.

What do you hope to learn from this project, and how do you hope to apply what you've learned over the long term?

This will be the first mobile app for WKAR, and we anticipate adding several others in the coming months. Since 'Off The Record' has an established audience, and a clearly defined content base, it was the most likely choice to begin with. We anticipate the lessons learned will inform the development and rollout of mobile apps for other shows, on both radio and television that WKAR currently produces. It is our expectation that all future shows will routinely include a mobile app as a regular part of its design and operation.

WKAR will keep promotion for the app ongoing throughout the state via "Off the Record" broadcasts, and keep programming, blogs and links current. We will learn through the analytics more about who is using our app. We will find out what episodes, blogs and links they are visiting, what public affairs topics they are most interested in, and what percentage are donating to WKAR. This feedback will be useful in planning topics for future episodes and election specials of 'Off the Record.'

WKAR is hopeful that the rollout and availability of the app throughout the state of Michigan will connect users to public affairs that they might not have had access to otherwise, and provide them with information needed to make good decisions at the polls. We are also looking to broaden WKAR's consumption of content to remote areas of Michigan and with people under the age of 30.

Why are you the right organization and team to do this project?

WKAR has a long tradition of innovation. WKAR TV went on the air in 1954. It is the second-oldest educational television station in the United States, and the oldest east of the Mississippi River. WKAR was an early adopter of digital technology as well, and began offering live and on demand streaming in 1999. In those early days of the Internet, television and radio station web sites primarily offered basic schedule information and music listings. WKAR was one of the first web sites in Michigan to offer content via streaming. WKAR.org also launched during these early years with episodes of our locally produced television programs for on-demand viewing.

Like many public broadcasting stations, WKAR has faced challenging financial times. We've also seen our staffing reduced by 15% since 2011. Although we've lost staffing, we've gained resources. WKAR administrative home is the MSU College of Communication Arts & Sciences. Through affiliation with the College, our connection to students and faculty has increased significantly.

We have also been busy creating content. Since 2011 three new television series' have been produced at WKAR; 'Current Sports,' highlighting college and high school athletics, 'Forte,' featuring the artistry of outstanding high school bands and orchestras, and 'Curious Crew,' a STEM based program for elementary and middle school children. Additionally, 'QuizBusters,' a high school based academic competition, just celebrated its 25th year, and 'BackStage

Pass,' an hour-long musical performance program is now in its 6th season. 'BackStage Pass' is distributed nationally and airs on 83 public stations around the country.

WKAR was honored with seven awards from the Michigan Association of Broadcasters including the coveted "Michigan Public Television Station of the Year" award, March 2014. This marks the third year in a row that WKAR has received this prestigious award. The "Station of the Year" recognizes not only the production elements of public broadcasting, but a station's overall achievements in community outreach and engagement, education services and other components that make public broadcasting a vibrant and essential part of the community.

WKAR engages Michigan residents on a daily basis. We make a difference in the civic life of residents throughout Michigan. By creating a mobile app for 'Off the Record', we will expand and extend the reach of our content and impact.

Why is this project timely? Why is now a good time to undertake this project?

The use of Smartphone's has continued to grow exponentially. Time spent using mobile apps is up 35% over last year. With the mid-term elections at hand, now is an important time to expand the dissemination of our existing content into the mobile space. By delivering content and digital resources on demand, we will expand the footprint with our current audience, and appeal to the "device behaviors" of today's Smartphone and tablet users. The result will be a more robust experience for everyone and will help build viewership which leads to new members and supporters.

With statewide voter turnout stagnant, and users of all ages seeking content on demand, the creation of an 'Off the Record' app is needed more than ever. As a television program 'Off the Record' has an established statewide audience and unique connection to current public affairs at the state capital. Expanding the reach of 'Off the Record' through a mobile app with all the ancillary and enhanced data and digital features will connect more Michigan residents to the social and political issues that impact their daily lives. This app will keep users informed about upcoming elections and connect them to resources to help make informed decisions at the polls.

Upload your project budget

[INNovation-Fund-budget-form-WKAR.xlsx](#)