

INNOVATION Fund Application Round 2

<b>Submission Date</b>	2014-09-02 22:07:12
<b>Organization Name</b>	Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism
<b>Tax-exempt status</b>	501(c)(3) organization
<b>EIN of organization (or of fiscal sponsor's organization)</b>	
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.wisconsinwatch.org">www.wisconsinwatch.org</a>
<b>Phone Number</b>	
<b>Applicant's name</b>	Andy Hall
<b>Title:</b>	Executive Director
<b>Contact email</b>	
<b>Proposed Start Date</b>	10-01-2014
<b>Proposed End Date</b>	08-31-2015
<b>Total estimated budget for the proposed project</b>	\$43,190
<b>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.</b>	\$406,200
<b>Request amount:</b>	\$35,000
<b>In two or three sentences, describe your organization's purpose and audience.</b>	<p>The nonpartisan, nonprofit Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism is increasing the quality and quantity of investigative reporting in Wisconsin, while training current and future generations of investigative journalists. Its work fosters an informed citizenry and strengthens democracy. The Center collaborates with Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television, the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism &amp; Mass Communication, and news media across the nation, including members of the Investigative News Network and Investigative Journalism Education Consortium.</p> <p>Since July 2009, the Center has produced more than 160 major news reports and 160 Money &amp; Politics columns that have been cited, published or broadcast by more than 230 newspapers, radio and TV stations and news websites in Wisconsin and nationwide. The estimated audience of the Center's reports exceeds 35 million people.</p>
<b>Describe in detail the project for which you are requesting funds.</b>	WCIJ's biggest need remains generation of revenue sources to allow for continued excellence of our award-

**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.**

winning journalism and training while positioning WCIJ for growth and long-term survival. A key to sustainability, of course, is meaningful engagement of constituencies, including the public and current and potential financial supporters.

This project, "Investigative Reporting + Art," is aligned with WCIJ's mission, while also helping to boost revenue and engagement.

Investigative Reporting + Art is a collaboration between WCIJ and Carrie Roy, a former University of Wisconsin-Madison artist. Roy is producing sculptures inspired by WCIJ reporter and multimedia director Kate Golden's coverage of water quality and supply issues in our ongoing Water Watch Wisconsin project.

We know this issue resonates throughout our state: Although Wisconsin is blessed with a large quantity of water compared to most other states, serious problems with the quality and quantity, largely stemming from the impacts of man and climate change, have prompted controversies over public policy and the rights of powerful interests over those of communities and small property owners. Our water stories commonly are picked up by 10 to 20 Wisconsin news organizations across the state.

We are producing a traveling exhibition that will raise money as well as awareness of WCIJ's work. The revenue will come from sponsorships that we will solicit from individuals, corporations and foundations, as well as auction proceeds when the sculptures are sold at the conclusion of the project.

The exhibition will be shown in our home city, Madison, as well as several additional Wisconsin cities -- likely Milwaukee, La Crosse, Appleton or Green Bay, Wausau and Ashland.

Roy is being reimbursed for her expenses (materials and travel) as well as her time.

Golden's work will be highlighted on display boards, photos and an interactive monitor that would allow visitors to access her data visualizations to see data pertaining to their communities.

All sponsorship money and donations raised through the project will flow to WCIJ.

We will conduct a silent and online auction of the pieces, with 50 percent of the proceeds supporting the artist and 50 percent supporting WCIJ.

We already have shown the first two of four planned sculptures at two events -- our annual Wisconsin Watchdog Awards and Resilient Wisconsin Day, an event produced by the nonprofit and nonpartisan Wisconsin Academy of Sciences Arts and Letters. The pieces generated many favorable comments, and discussions of the issues that inspired their creation. We also presented our plan in a lightning round presentation at INN Day at the IRE Conference in San Francisco in 2014, and received a warm reception. In fact, even before our project is ready for launch,

we have heard interest from the Center for Investigative Reporting in Berkeley, The Lens in New Orleans and Rocky Mountain PBS in Denver, who may be interested in adapting aspects of this project to their areas.

We plan to schedule the exhibition for public spaces such as libraries and universities. In Madison, for example, this may include the Central Library and campus venues such as Union South, Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery, the Design Gallery at the UW School of Human Ecology, plus the Commonwealth Gallery on Baldwin Street.

We will consult with our insurance company to obtain a rider for ensuring the art and travel. The company probably will require that one of us -- artist or staffer -- stay with the work.

We will develop a press kit and spread the word prior to our arrival to our networks of media figures and others interested in our coverage and art.

We will explore the feasibility of exhibiting the works at various spaces across the state (rather than just showing them for a day).

Working with our legal counsel, we will develop a written description of who owns the works, as well as rights to use the images and other copyright-like issues.

We will seek to generate revenue through a variety of methods, including crowdfunding, and a local site, Dane Arts power2give.org, that has been successful for some projects.

### 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?

Kate Golden, WCIJ multimedia director and reporter, is the lead reporter on Water Watch Wisconsin, an ongoing examination of water quality and supply issues. Golden specializes in environmental stories and data visualizations, and is handy in print, radio, video, photo and online media. She came to the Center in 2010 from Alaska, where she reported on natural resources and business for the Juneau Empire. Before she got into journalism, Golden spent a year studying lowland gorillas in central Africa and collected oral histories in Zanzibar; she has also worked as a photographer. Her work has appeared in Marketplace, washingtonpost.com, and many an Alaska news outlet. Golden has degrees from Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Andy Hall, WCIJ executive director. Hall holds more than three dozen national, statewide and local awards from nearly 30 years as an investigative newspaper reporter in Indiana, Arizona and Wisconsin. He is the founder of WCIJ and responsible for day-to-day operations, long-range planning, arranging and managing collaborations with media and UW journalism classes, financial management, editing, fundraising and supervising a staff of four full-time professionals and four student interns.

Lauren Fuhrmann, WCIJ associate director. Fuhrmann is responsible for tracking the reach of the Center's stories, publicizing our work and engaging our constituents, including the public, potential donors and other journalists.

She also assists with the website and bookkeeping, and is a co-organizer of INN's social media training series. In February 2014, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association honored her one of the five inaugural recipients of its Future Headliners Award, created to recognize outstanding young industry leaders. She is vice president of the local SPJ chapter.

The key outside contract work is being performed by Carrie Roy, whom we met through connections in the statistics department here on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus:

Carrie Roy, artist. Roy grew up on a cattle ranch in southeast North Dakota and received her bachelor's degree from Harvard in 2002 in Visual and Environmental Studies, where she focused on sculpture and photography. The ethnographic interests explored in her undergraduate work led her to pursue advanced degrees in the humanities -- Ph.D University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., August 2011; M.A. First Class with distinction, University of Iceland, Reykjavík 2008; M.A. University of Wisconsin, Madison, September 2006. Roy most recently worked as a post-doctoral researcher and coordinator for a digital humanities initiative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Humanities Research Bridge. In summer 2014, she relocated to Denver with her husband.

In addition to WCIJ's supportive board, two other key figures already are aboard: Gail Kohl, development consultant, assists the board with event planning and access to potential major Wisconsin donors; and Kate Schuman, a Wisconsin native who has switched from journalism to focus on major donor donor development for the Tulane University Center for Public Service in New Orleans, serves on the WCIJ board's Revenue Committee. Her pro bono counsel already is proving to be valuable.

This project is being integrated into WCIJ's vision for growth and sustainability. The WCIJ board has determined that because of the importance of accessing up-to-date insights regarding the status of nonprofit investigative journalism organizations in building its vision for the next five years, it has hired Rusty and Janet Coats, Coats2Coats Consultancy, <http://coats2coats.com/>, whose clients include media companies, startups, foundations, universities and news entrepreneurs. Their leadership of INN's successful CJET program, which already has greatly benefited WCIJ, makes them a natural choice to guide WCIJ in development of a realistic strategy for the growth of the Center. The board's daylong retreat is set for Oct. 10 and is preceded by a board and staff survey and research by Coats2Coats.

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

We will track the number of people viewing the project in person and online, publicity about the project (generated by WCIJ and other organizations), sponsors recruited and signed up, potential donors contacted, the types and frequencies of contact involved, and the results achieved. Results will include current donations and sponsorships, future pledges of support, crowdfunding and in-kind assistance such as hosting WCIJ events or providing advertising to WCIJ. Also, regarding the auction: number of people, corporations and foundations placing bids in person

and online, amounts raised, and potential for conversion of them into donors. For context, these 2014 metrics will be compared to prior years, and will be compared to best practices recognized in the industry.

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

Thresholds of success will include:

- # of people viewing in person: 300
- # of online viewers: 1,000
- sponsors recruited: 25
- sponsors signed up: 3
- \$ in sponsorships: \$5,000
- in-kind support: value of \$1,000
- # of bids in person: 15
- # of bids online: 15
- \$ raised through auction: \$10,000
- crowdfunding: \$2,500
- # of donors obtained through crowdfunding or other means: 15
- # of promises of future funding or sponsorships of WCIJ: 3
- \$ value of promises of future funding or sponsorships of WCIJ: \$2,500
- descriptions of key audiences reached, defined as people directly affected by well water quality, environmental impacts of dairy industry, other issues highlighted in the sculptures and stories
- descriptions of policymakers reached directly or indirectly through the project
- qualitative impacts of the project, including comments received by WCIJ, letters to editors, editorials, letters to policymakers, discussions in public or within advocacy organizations

**How will INN be able to validate the metrics and how the project did using those metrics?**

These metrics will be compiled monthly and will be made available to INN for validation, including, if desired, permission to directly contact individuals, corporations and foundations cited by WCIJ.

**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 project will help WCIJ learn two critical things about its business operations:

- 1) Does an innovative project such as Investigative Reporting + Art strengthen WCIJ's efforts toward sustainability?
- 2) What is the best configuration of staffers and contractors to strengthen WCIJ's business operations, particularly its revenue generation efforts?

In addition, this project will help other INN members determine whether a similar model might be effective within their communities.

We will immediately apply these insights, throughout 2014 and beyond, to strengthen WCIJ's business operations. By continually assessing WCIJ's financial performance, we will know whether we are meeting our goals, which factors are responsible for success or failure, and what should be adjusted in the future.

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

We are at the forefront of national efforts to sustain nonprofit investigative journalism.

Associate Director Lauren Fuhrmann and Jason Alcorn of InvestigateWest are making strong progress in their

initiatives to develop meaningful, efficient methods to help nonprofit newsrooms and funders track their work and assess its impact. Highlights include: A) Devising a Google Analytics dashboard template that could become an industry standard for automated compilation of key website metrics; prototype available soon. B) Evaluation in a Box -- a partially automated, potential industry standard for measuring reach and impact, launched by Fuhrmann and Alcorn, now being furthered by USC, Tow Center, INN members and others. C) Audience engagement indicators. Fuhrmann is among about a dozen people who were invited to attend an Aug. 6 NYC workshop focusing on possible categories and types of large and small offline impact indicators -- things not captured in Google Analytics.

At CJET 2, Fuhrmann provided expert help, via a presentation and packed "office hours," to organizations seeking help with assessments of their public engagement and impact. Executive Director Andy Hall received coaching - still ongoing -- from INN CEO Kevin Davis to strengthen WCJ's business practices. Heeding the advice of experts, Hall has delegated journalistic duties to others to carve out additional time for business activities. In other words, we're continuously adapting, learning, and sharing our successes and struggles with our counterparts across the nation.

Fuhrmann and Kate Golden, multimedia director, led a major upgrade of our website, the first in four years, working with INN's Largo project. Completed in 2014, this increased our website's functionality and efficiency, making us a stronger organization and expanding our capabilities of connecting with potential donors and engaging with the public and the journalists who use our content.

Our core strengths remain much as they've been for the past several years: our successful, adaptable business model, our first-rate board of directors and our skillful and resourceful staff.

Our operations have adapted since the 2009 launch (improving significantly through Challenge Fund for Journalism in 2010) to better prepare WCJ for long-term survival, while retaining the high-quality journalism and collaborative approach at the heart of the organization's operations.

We are producing well-researched, fact-checked, high-impact reports that are reaching millions of people who become better-informed members of society. Our internship training system is intense and is producing tough, skilled journalists who are thriving in their careers after leaving the Center. And we are helping develop and spread knowledge about ways to sustain investigative journalism despite a tough economy and downward trends in for-profit media sectors.

The board of directors is highly engaged in these efforts and is mindful of the challenges that organizations face in transitioning from start-up to long-term operations.

The staff possesses a strong blend of skills, intelligence and work ethic. It is agile, and it adapts quickly to challenges and opportunities.

Overarching all of this is an emphasis upon collaboration. We frequently field calls and emails from venerable and startup operations around the nation who seek information about our operations, such as bylaws, articles of incorporation, fundraising policy, facilities use agreement with the university, collaboration relationships with news organizations, password-protected distribution system, our orientation checklist for interns, fact-checking system, stories we're producing and data we're analyzing (particularly agribusiness and the environment). Staff members Hall, Fuhrmann and Kate Golden participated in and led panels and discussions at the recent INN Day and IRE conference in San Francisco on issues including metrics and impact, the art project, covering agribusiness, collaborating on data analysis and involving students in investigations.

We freely report what's working and what's not, and we learn from others. This increases the flow of information, and the rate of progress. And it ensures that whatever is learned from WCIJ's experiences in INNnovation will be widely shared to improve other newsrooms' knowledge and operations.

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

Having completed five years of operations, we now face a pivotal year. It's obvious that some of the financial pillars of our formative years are either pulling back or nearing a point where they will reduce or eliminate support of WCIJ.

One reason that this is a good time to innovate is that 2014 is on track to be a good year. We do not face an emergency -- the perfect time to put in place a strategy for growth and improvement.

Fuhrmann and Hall are making strong progress on grants, having promising discussions regarding corporate sponsorships and our training revenue, and continuing to move ahead with work on individual donors and expanding the WCIJ Board to further enhance its revenue generation capacity. (School of Journalism and Mass Communication director Hemant Shah joined the board this summer.)

We're controlling expenditures while working hard to attain our revenue target for the year, and we have five months of operating revenue in the bank.

Of particular note is our progress with the Open Society Foundation, which, as you may recall, recently appeared to be on the verge of providing us, at best, a \$50,000 final grant. Through an exhaustive, two-step process, we now appear to be on the verge of being declared eligible for two to five additional years of OSF support, at which point we'll be asked to submit a formal grant proposal that potentially could provide significant revenue (\$50,000 on up) before the end of 2014.

Also under way: initiatives to boost WCIJ's marketing, branding and fundraising.

As you can see, we're also pushing ahead with attempts to acquire revenue from journalism industry sources -- private as well as corporate and foundation.

A quick summary of our other major pending revenue activities:

- Herzfeld Foundation in Milwaukee, \$25,000, to be requested in 2014, at suggestion of a Herzfeld board member
- Open Society Foundations (could be \$50,000 or much more, likely at least two years, fast track this fall and early winter)
- Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation (WNA formed a committee to determine how to support WCIJ, potential revenue beginning in 2014)
- Gannett, where the 10 Wisconsin newsrooms are discussing potential 2/3 funding of a newly created statehouse investigative reporting fellows who would be employed by WCIJ beginning in 2015
- A newly formed Publisher's Council, led by former Wisconsin State Journal publisher James Burgess, to solicit personal and corporate support from current and former publishers
- Reva and David Logan Foundation, sporadic interaction with president Jon Logan, who expresses interest in WCIJ
- Sally Mead Hands Foundation (based in Madison, could grow into a five or six figure supporter, discussions ongoing)
- Democracy Fund (principal Tom Glaisyer interested in supporting WCIJ if we pitch a plan for transforming an initiative into an ongoing operation after DF support phases out)
- Wisconsin Public Radio, our partners, examining ways to financially support our work through a new WPR fund dedicated to media innovation efforts. One possibility is creating a fellowship. Also possible that after a test period, WPR may support some work performed for WPR by WCIJ multimedia director Kate Golden. We're working on this.
- WISC-TV, local CBS affiliate, discussions of WCIJ production of content with financial support
- Kohl Foundation (former U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl) -- making contacts through his advisers
- Two Wisconsin independent producers of radio and video documentaries who have recently approached WCIJ about collaboration on funding and content

Thank you for this opportunity to develop and achieve a new channel for WCIJ's continuing success!

#### **Upload your project budget**

[INNovation-Fund-WisconsinWatch-budget.xlsx](#)

**Optional: if you wish, you may provide additional material about your project, including screenshots, plans, marketing material, or estimates from vendors who will help you carry out your project. If you have more than one file, please package them as a single .ZIP file before uploading.**

[Additional materials.zip](#)