INNovation Fund Application Round 4 - Dec. 8, 2015

Submission Date	2015-12-03 18:31:20
Organization Name	ASU Foundation for a New American University
Tax-exempt status	501(c)(3) organization
EIN of organization (or of fiscal sponsor's organization)	86-6051042
Website address	http://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/
Phone Number	(602) 496-9448
Applicant's name	Kristin Gilger
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Proposed Project Start Date	01-25-2016
Anticipated Project End Date	06-30-2016
Total estimated budget for the proposed project	$10,000
Request amount from the INNovation Fund:	$10,000
What is the total annual budget for your organization or, if you are a fiscally-sponsored project of another organization, the total annual budget for your fiscally-sponsored project.	$30,700,000
In two or three sentences, describe your organization's purpose and audience.	ASU Foundation for a New American University is the fiscal agent for projects at the Cronkite School, which runs Arizona PBS and Cronkite News. All students are required to participate in Cronkite News to get their degrees. At any given time, the newsroom is roughly 100 students and 16 professionals. Cronkite News is a community-engaged news service used by media through Arizona. It produces an evening statewide newscast for Arizona PBS that reaches two million households.

Describe in detail the business experiment 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.	We're going to do our first-ever crowd-funding campaign. The campaign will expand the Cronkite News Borderlands team (two top professional and 8-12 students) to better cover immigration and other Latino issues for Arizona and national media as well as statewide PBS. The funding also will help us do a special Border project with a national TV network and at least one major newspaper.

We're hoping to win a grant from the INNovation Fund to help us learn and share as much as we can about crowd-funding in a university-based journalism context. We want to analyze project data and test different social media advertising approaches.

A successful campaign, and an understanding of why it was successful, will help us decide if we should add crowd-funding as a regular revenue provider. Other journalism schools that are major community news providers may want to consider whether their institutions should crowd-fund.

Though digital crowd-funding for journalism has existed in earnest for a decade, since the Knight Foundation funded Spot.Us, news organizations did not pick it up rapidly. Today, however, nonprofit news organizations such as the Texas Tribune are effectively using crowd-funding. Kickstarter, IndieGoGo, Beacon Reader and other platforms, raising hundreds of millions of dollars in overall project funding.

This important new alternative is not being used in any major way by journalism education. Yet journalism schools that are part of the "teaching hospital model" of journalism education, in which professionals oversee news reports that are used by the community at large, are filling gaps in the local news landscape left by shrinking commercial newsrooms.

Most of these immersive programs do not emphasize the community engagement aspects of newsgathering. Cronkite News wants to help change that. We work with the Arizona Public Insight Network bureau within the Cronkite School to engage with the community. We are expanding this year into bilingual English/Spanish engagement.

We think the crowd-funding experiment will give us experience with a new group of people in a different form of engagement.
While much of the basic reporting cost is embedded within the university itself, "teaching hospital" advocates will tell you they need supplemental funds for everything from travel to technology to bringing in teachers with particular expertise. Crowd-funding might provide help for these programs nationwide. Though individual professors, such as Dan Pacheco of Syracuse University, have experimented with small crowd-funding projects, to our knowledge it hasn't been "baked in" to a major journalism program.

We'd like to gain insight into as many of these question as possible: Who will donate to a university-based news crowd-funding project? Alumni? Faculty and staff? People who usually donate to public media, but favor this topic-based approach? People who have never donated to media who are deeply interested in the issue? How do acknowledgements and gifts (like T-shirts) influence the number of donations in those categories? How well does our pitch perform? Overall, does crowd-funding that involves student journalism seem to draw more support because one is helping the students as well as the organization and news coverage?

We would split the $10,000 into main parts, with half going to a series of social media advertising experiments targeting the above groups, and half going to data analysis and dissemination of the results.

Which of the following statements best describes your proposed business experiment?	Principally a stand-alone revenue-generating project that we plan to do again if successful
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?	The Cronkite News executive editor, Borderlands Bureau director, Public Insight Network director, communications director and students are preparing the crowd-funding campaign. Our partner is Beacon Reader, which will provide a match for immigration coverage. We think we can embed crowd-funding campaign costs into our regular operation. What we'd like to do with the grant is really understand what's at work during the campaign, and how different types of social media perform as marketing for crowd-funding.
How will you measure progress? Please be specific and concrete about the metrics you will use? Suggestion: Keep the number of suggested metrics limited and make sure that they are actually measuring the results of the proposed business experiment.	Beacon Reader will give us access to a great deal of data from its crowd-funding platform, including real time data. We can get clicks, time on site, the conversion rates of visits-to-dollars for the groups mentioned above. We believe we can associate spikes in the giving patterns to the different targeting we will try through social media advertising. Because Beacon will give us access to as much data as we can use, our need is for additional analysts to study the results, draw out insights, and find ways to make them easy to understand and share. The campaign itself will only run for just 30 days, starting Jan. 25, 2016. But we propose the analysis go on after that. We are exploring the options of hiring talented students from the business school or outside consultants to help with the data project. We also will be able to follow up with questionnaires of all the crowd-funders to find out more about who they are, how they found out about the campaign and why they gave.
Using those metrics, how will you know you have succeeded in meeting the objectives for the business experiment. Please be as specific as possible.	It's important to learn the know in whether the natural crowd-funders for our project come from the ASU community, the community of public broadcasting viewers, the community interested in the topic, or elsewhere. Another big question is whether people see the involvement of student journalists as a second reason to give: you're helping fund important stories but also helping create the next generation of journalists.
How will INN be able to validate the metrics and how the project did using those metrics?	We will be able to share the data from Beacon Reader and the social media outlets, our analysis, and questionnaire results.
What do you hope to learn from this project, and how do you hope to apply what you've learned over the long term?	We know we can raise funds from Cronkite School alumni and parents for general support . But we don't know if we can effectively reach out to them or the general public in this kind of topic-based way. Now that Arizona PBS is operated run by the Cronkite School, the number and type of programs that appear might be affected by crowd-funding.
Why are you the right organization and team to do this project?	We have a comprehensive "teaching hospital" model and are helping lead immersive journalism education. We believe our reach through AZ PBS as well as state and national partners may be the greatest of the teaching hospitals, and that AZ PBS may be the largest local content provider of the PBS stations. This puts us in a position to not only experiment with engagement and innovation in our program but to share what we have learned in ways that draw attention.

How is this project similar/different than other projects you've researched ahead of this proposal? What can you learn that is different from what others have already tried?	We also are raising offline funds for the Borderlands project. We will able to compare the type and amount of the offline grants to the online donations. We would also be able to compare our project to other crowdfunding on immigration reporting by traditional media as well as other non-profits.
Why is this project timely? Why is now a good time to undertake this project?	It's a good time to explore crowd-funding of student journalism. High school publications continue to be shut down by principals, who cite costs. State universities continue to face budget cuts. Individual professors sometimes want to try crowd-funding but their institutions can be slow to embrace it. Is crowd-funding a viable revenue stream for school-based journalism? That's an answer better known sooner than later.
Upload your project budget	12.3.15.INNovation-Fund-Project-Budget-Template.xlsx