

Open Media Project

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Amount Requested = \$150,000

Organization Budget = Revenues: \$2,452,200

Expenses: \$2,438,417

Net Profit: \$13,783

Project Budget = \$275,000

1. Please provide a brief and general statement of the organization's overall mission.

The Open Media Foundation (OMF) is an innovative media and technology nonprofit dedicated to putting the power of the media into the hands of the people, enabling everyone to engage in their community and bring about the change they wish to see in the world. OMF was founded to help underserved and disadvantaged communities raise public awareness and impact public policy through innovative media and technology solutions. Hundreds of nonprofit and government organizations rely on OMF for their websites, videos, and communications each year, while thousands of individuals are served through our media education classes and equipment to harness the power of the media to create change in their communities. With over a decade of experience in offering media and technology [services](#), [education](#), and [tools](#), to nonprofits and individuals, we have launched our most innovative tool yet, a cloud-based software solution for increased government transparency, accessibility, and civic engagement.

2. A brief statement of the goals and purposes of the project:

The Open Media Project for Government ([OMP](#)) is a suite of government transparency tools that reduce costs and expand civic engagement through searchable access to government video. With features that no other provider offers, the OMP makes legislative agendas, journals, bills, and video accessible online through livestreaming, and organizes searchable archives so that citizens can find information and discussions about issues they follow. The OMP is currently the most flexible and affordable solution on the market for governments and, based on successes like the State Legislature's [Colorado Channel](#) and [others](#), it's ready to be scaled nationwide. As the only nonprofit creating government transparency software, we've made great strides in Colorado and are ready to offer our flagship Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) to clients across the U.S., where demand for these services is booming.

There are over 35,000 state and municipal governments in the U.S and at least ten times that many courts, school boards, and policy-making entities looking for solutions like the OMP. Public demand, as well as new laws that require governments to provide accessible video and documentation of their proceedings, has left these bodies searching for solutions. The OMP provides an affordable transparency solution for *all* entities – even those that are small and/or cash-strapped. An informed electorate is an empowered electorate, and, increasing civic awareness and involvement is a critical step towards realizing the Open Media Foundation's mission. By offering this powerful package nationwide, we will move closer to enabling *everyone* to engage in their community and bring about the change they wish to see in the world.

Our commercial competitors are experiencing [major revenue growth](#) as more and more governments require greater transparency. The market leader, Granicus, has 20,000+ clients and charges each client tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. The OMP was built from deep research of Granicus, Swagit, EarthChannel and others to provide a superior full-service solution, leveraging emerging technologies to enable costs that are 50% to 90% lower than our competitors. Unlike commercial providers, who lock-down metadata and bind clients in long-term agreements, we are committed to open data and to helping clients see the benefits of working with nonprofit service providers for whom the mission is not just lip-service, but institutionalized as a priority.

Since 2012, we have effectively expanded civic engagement at the highest levels in Colorado. Our first client was the Colorado State Legislature, whose costs were cut by 50%, while their web traffic more than doubled compared with any previous year of service provided by Granicus. More open and searchable content has helped the legislature's [Colorado Channel](#) increase its number of unique visitors per month by 140% over any of the previous five years. Ten years ago, watching a state legislature or city council at work required a trip to the Capitol or City building. Today, more people see excerpts of this work through OMP Facebook embeds in a single day than visit the City building in a year. Subsequent clients, including the Colorado State Supreme Court and the City Council of Thornton have experienced similar results. Our innovative approach enables rapid implementation, human-centered design, beneficial partnerships, and affordable pricing. Our product's adaptable, user-friendly interface is the result of over \$500,000 in support from the Knight Foundation, the City of Denver, and the Colorado State Legislature.

For over a decade, the Open Media Foundation has provided platforms and training designed to empower underserved communities and help them shape public awareness through media. The OMP's code base originated in 2006 when we launched a unique community-run public access TV station: Denver Open Media. This user-driven station operates on 3 channels and is made possible by our groundbreaking software that allows over 300 community producers to run one channel directly, creating and scheduling all shows themselves, and allows over 100,000 viewers to schedule another channel through their votes and ratings. In 2012, OMF expanded our focus from helping underserved communities shift public awareness to helping them shift public policy. Our OMP software has unprecedented capacity to expand government accountability and accessibility, and promote civic engagement, a critical step towards realizing our mission.

With this replicable SAAS project, we could be serving thousands of government clients and saving them time and money. Our entire R&D budget was generously provided by grants and government support, and our open architecture leverages open-source solutions and emerging tools. Since our OMP launch, we've passed this savings onto our clients who can access the OMP for as little as \$6,000/year, a 50%-90% savings compared to commercial options. Now, our goal is to take price barriers completely off the table by offering OMP for free to the smallest governments, and providing a 50% matching grant to governments serving populations less than 50,000.

While competitors use closed tools that tie up video and metadata in proprietary systems, our approach leverages innovations from partners like YouTube, the Internet Archive (Archive.org), and Sunlight Foundation who specialize in different aspects of this innovative government transparency solution. Competitors have spent millions to develop streaming services only to be outpaced by free services like YouTube, which offers features like automated transcriptions that no commercial service can match. We've partnered with Archive.org's experts from the start to offer permanent video and metadata archiving at no cost. Details about the OMP can be found at <http://ompnetwork.org/>.

3. Discuss the specific activities you will carry out to achieve the goals of this project:

The Open Media Foundation seeks funding to undertake the marketing, sales, account management and continual evaluation required to scale-up and develop partnerships with clients nationwide. To bring the enormous competitive and comparative advantages of the OMP to the public, and save government funds that could be spent on other public services, we must rapidly scale-up and develop partnerships to increase

our market share. This requires hiring new staff, providing ongoing motivational management to our sales and marketing teams, and diligent, continual relationship and partner building.

By 2018, the Open Media Foundation will have 5 staff members dedicated to the OMP, supported by our existing staff of nearly 20 FTE. OMF will work with partners to devise the optimal marketing and sales approach to take this product to scale and convene current and future partners (YouTube, Sunlight Foundation, Archive.org, Google) to solidify their investment in mutually-beneficial OMP software integration.

Our expertise is honed by over a decade of specialized media services and web-based software development. Hundreds of nonprofit and government projects across Colorado and the U.S. have helped us create workflows that are cost-effective, time-saving, and simple. As our client base grows, we expect reduced costs and further innovations, like remote production using IP cameras and switchers that enable staff in Denver to direct/produce government coverage nationwide. Many expenses are dropping significantly and becoming commodities, such as YouTube and Facebook live-streaming, and unlike our competitors, the OMP is designed to integrate and leverage new, innovative, low-cost tools as they arise.

4. A timeline for proposed activities:

The OMP was demonstrated for the first time at the 2012 National Association of Public Affairs Networks meeting, and subsequently presented at the NATOA and ACM national conferences. In Colorado, word has spread with little to no marketing, thanks in large part to our success with the State Legislature. OMF now has 13 government clients, and is honing the product for widescale use in preparation to launch the OMP nation-wide once funds are secured. At a larger scale, we could be helping thousands of state and local governments be open, all of the time, to increase civic engagement nationwide at a reduced cost for taxpayers.

Using our experience with the CO State Legislature as our guide, we plan to engage the other 49 State Legislatures in 2017, offering our services with the 50% matching. Securing these larger entities will help with expansion into the smaller, local governments, as we've seen in CO. By 2019, OMF plans to have six total staff devoted to the OMP, and through our marketing and outreach efforts and the free version of our software, we expect to have thousands of government clients. Software development and maintenance is handled internally by our talented staff. Our open architecture ensures flexibility and continuity of service. For cloud-based hosting, we have experience with dozens of vendors through our extensive web development history. We currently use Pantheon for hosting, which caters to SaaS solutions like ours, enabling significant scalability and easy management of thousands of sites simultaneously. From a technical standpoint, and thanks to our SaaS model, our technical team is ready to serve our client base even with a significant increase in clientele.

5. A discussion of potential challenges, current/potential partners:

With their enormous sales and marketing staff, our competitors are outselling the OMP, which to-date has relied on word-of-mouth for sales. With a product and implementation process that has been streamlined and perfected with our initial customers, the primary challenge we face is outreach and sales. Seeing the opportunity and success of this project, OMF has hired our first salesperson, and our top priority is to rapidly grow our capacity for marketing, sales, and account management with new staff positions. In Colorado, word has spread thanks to our success with the State Legislature (see this testimonial from Senator Pat Steadman: <http://kng.ht/1KcbBkz>). Clients report unanimous satisfaction with our service and utility and we have strong proof of concept, including the City Council of Thornton, CO; Louisville, CO City Council and Planning Commission; Pitkin County Board of Commissioners; and City Council of Littleton, CO.

The Statewide Internet Portal Authority (SIPA), which provides technological solutions to hundreds of Colorado government entities, has signed on as a partner, ready to bring our work to thousands of government agencies. OMF will work with new partners like SIPA and the Texas Association of School Boards, (which supports hundreds of school districts implementing video transparency solutions in

accordance with new statewide laws) to devise optimal marketing and sales approaches. We will convene existing partners (YouTube, Sunlight, Archive.org, Google) to solidify their investment in mutually-beneficial OMP software integration, while securing additional partners, especially in the hardware realm, where we have seen competitors make significant strides.

With adequate staffing and promotion, this project will succeed nationwide because of its superior utility and our commitment to excellent service and affordability. As a nonprofit, OMF has a level of trust that our competitors lack, and State and local governments are taking notice. Our first webinar promoting the OMP outside of Colorado had over 100 registrations from individuals serving state and local governments. Receiving funding is crucial right now because we have the opportunity to maximize momentum and promote our work while it is top-of-mind for potential clients.

6. How will you utilize funding to leverage additional support?

OMF seeks \$150,000 to cover the matching grant for 50 new clients. Funding will make exponential, disruptive growth into new markets almost inevitable.

The Open Media Foundation has always generated the majority of our revenue through earned income, with slow and consistent growth stemming from strong word of mouth in the nonprofit and government sectors. OMF strongly believes that the OMP has the capacity to produce more revenue than all other projects combined. Revenue from this project will support the Open Media Foundation's nonprofit mission by strengthening and continually improving our full range of services, education, and tools that have been designed to advance equity, accountability, social justice, and participatory democracy.

Open Media Project provides the most engaging and user-friendly access to official government business on the market. Existing clients report significant traffic increases in tandem with lower costs. Our SaaS is modeled after leading competitors and includes key advantages and improvements. Unlike our competitors who had to invest millions in R&D before launch, our entire development budget was shouldered through grants and government support. Our specialization in government and nonprofit media services has allowed us to bring innovations from our work on hundreds of related projects and to devise workflows that save time and are simple to use. As we get the word out, clients will see these competitive advantages and sign-on.

Furthermore, this new staffing will help us solicit additional support, partnership, and investment. We currently have 3 proposals pending and recently received a \$35,000 prototype grant from the Knight Foundation, which has enabled us to develop another unprecedented and innovative feature that can set our product apart (voice fingerprint ID, which combines with automated transcription to document every word spoken by every legislator). Our competitors in this space include some of the fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. and from an ROI percentage standpoint, this project has been our most profitable service. With even modest marketing and promotion, we are confident that our client base will grow significantly enough to become a sustainable and profitable revenue source for our nonprofit organization.

7. Explain what method of evaluation will be employed and what benchmarks will be used to track the progress of the grant.

A major focus of our marketing and sales effort is the development of strong evaluation. Our clients are experiencing unprecedented levels of traffic and engagement, and we hope to add staff who can document this impact for use in marketing and sales efforts. In addition, we will be tracking and reporting the growing number of government clients and the increase in their website traffic, similar to the results posted by the Colorado House & Senate at coloradochannel.net. These direct measurements will give our team a solid idea of how many people are able to use the OMP to engage with their community, easily access information, and participate in public debate. Support for increased use of Google Analytics among our clients will show the impact of OMP's service.

OMF will provide quarterly reports on marketing and sales, including these impact metrics, revenues generated, and new clients & partners.