

Name of Organization: Center for Public Integrity

Tax Status: 501(c)(3) public charity

Purpose of Grant: to support the New Orleans Record, a new nonprofit journalism initiative that will provide news, information, and access to data related to Gulf Coast issues of public interest.

FPOS Grant Description: The Center for Public Integrity will serve as the fiscal sponsor of the New Orleans Record, a new journalism initiative that will provide news, information, and access to data related to Gulf Coast issues including criminal justice, education, local government, the environment, the economy, land use, and politics. The New Orleans Record will also participate in the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance, an initiative that brings together a range of nonprofit organizations that share a commitment to working collaboratively to build a more transparent and accountable city governance structure.

Previous OSI Support: \$3,462,554 to the Center for Public Integrity, \$0 to the *New Orleans Record*

Organization Budget: \$4,412,792 (Center for Public Integrity)

Project Budget: \$315,400

Other Sources of Support: For the New Orleans Record:

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| Zeitoun Foundation | \$5,000 |
| Transforma Foundation | \$ 400 |
| Knight Foundation (pending) | \$70,000 |

Amount Requested: \$155,000 over 1 year

Amount Recommended: \$155,000

Term: November 1, 2009 to October 31, 2010

Description of Organization

The Center for Public Integrity (CPI) is an award-winning non-profit investigative journalism organization. It was founded in 1989 and has produced over 400 investigative reports and 17 books since its inception. Located in Washington, D.C., CPI's executive director, William Buzenberg, is the former head of NPR News and Minnesota Public Radio News.

CPT's mission is to produce investigative journalism about significant public issues to make institutional power more transparent and accountable. Its reportage goes beyond the daily news cycle to uncover the complexities of topical stories, and broadcast those findings in innovative ways. CPT's most recent investigation examines 350 million mortgages (raw data from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development) to expose which banks fueled the sub-prime meltdown but are now receiving "bailout" funds. It will also examine the connection between financial services industry lobbyists and legislators over the past decade. Each of the Center's investigative projects is produced in several formats to maximize impact, including print, web, audio, and video, and is distributed through multiple media outlets.

Description of Program for Which Funding Is Sought

This grant would provide seed funding for the New Orleans Record (the Record), a new journalism initiative that will provide high-quality journalism and data-driven investigation and analysis on Gulf Coast issues including criminal justice, education, local government, the environment, the economy, land use, and politics.

In addition to regular "beat" coverage on issues of public interest, the Record will conduct several longer term investigations. For example, the Record will develop a multi-part investigative series on the New Orleans procurement process, a notoriously opaque, patronage-based system. The series will explore the impact of minority preference policies and the legacy of segregation still expressed in the contracting process. The series will also highlight examples of more transparent public contracting processes around the country.

The Record is exploring a partnership with OSI grantee Project on Government Oversight (POGO) on an investigative series on the impact of mineral royalties on Gulf Coast communities and the environment. The Record would report on oversight and enforcement problems that have cost local and state governments millions in royalties and would highlight the impact on communities and the environment in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.

The Record is also exploring a collaborative investigative project with CPI. The Record would provide analysis and investigative reporting on Louisiana's compliance with the state financial disclosure and ethics laws passed last year by the State Legislature. The Record would assess whether the reforms are leading to more accountable and transparent government. In addition to investigating state ethics reform, the Record would also cover ethics reform issues on a local level in New Orleans and other Gulf Coast cities, reporting on the effectiveness of current programs and new reform proposals.

The Record will participate in the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance, a new initiative (also included in this docket) that brings together a range of nonprofit

organizations that share a commitment to working collaboratively to build a more transparent and accountable city governance structure.

Jed Horne will serve as editor-in-chief of the Record. Horne is the author of *Breach of Faith: Hurricane Kairina and the Near Death of a Great American City*, published by Random House. Born and educated in Massachusetts, Horne began with the Boston Phoenix, and worked in New York in the 1970's and 1980's as a writer and editor, primarily with Time Inc. publications. He moved to New Orleans in the late 1980's to work as the Latin America foreign correspondent and metro editor for the Times Picayune. Karen Gadbois will serve as a contributing writer for the Record. Gadbois' citizen journalism was primarily responsible for exposing widespread corruption and misuse of federal recovery funds.

CPI director Bill Buzenberg has agreed to provide organizational and editorial advice to the Record, and will provide access to CPI's computer assisted reporting expertise and resources. When appropriate, CPI will distribute stories from the Record through its more established network. The Record will also become a member of the Investigative News Network, which recently received seed funding from OSI.

Rationale for Recommendation

The Strategic Opportunities Fund and the Transparency and Integrity Fund jointly recommend a grant of \$155,000 over one year. This grant would advance SOF's goal of collaborating with other U.S. Programs funds to articulate shared goals and strategies in the New Orleans/Gulf Coast Region. The grant would advance the Transparency & Integrity Fund's goal of identifying and supporting promising models to ensure equitable access to high quality journalism, with a special focus on original reporting on public affairs at the local and state levels. TIF has identified Louisiana as one of several states of interest to its emerging state-based grantmaking strategy, with a special focus on Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular.

As newsrooms, particularly at the city and state level, have reduced reporting staff, there is no longer a sufficient professional workforce to serve as the public's monitor of the behavior of state and local officials. On average, fewer than five reporters now cover state governments, with time-consuming deep-dive investigative work sacrificed almost entirely. Lost in the diminishing coverage are stories on conflicts-of-interest, financial irregularities, lobbying by corporate interests, ethical lapses, and criminal wrongdoing.

The consequence of diminished investigative reporting on issues of public interest is especially acute on the Gulf Coast, where communities are still struggling with the process of rebuilding, public policies are undergoing major reform, and billions in federal recovery money is being spent with little oversight or accountability.

The Record will report on local issues of national significance. The struggles of post-Katrina and Rita communities to rebuild despite corrupt contracting practices, decaying physical infrastructure, inadequate public education, and shortages in affordable housing

are relevant to communities across the country. In addition to the national relevance of Public Record's content, its organizational structure would serve as a model for other regions seeking a forum for data-driven, analytic journalism at a time when overall access to information is expanding, but trusted outlets for high-quality, data driven journalism are shrinking.

Although the Record will participate in the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance, it will not serve as the communications arm of the Coalition, and will retain complete editorial independence. The Record's participation in the Coalition comes second to its primary function as an outlet for high quality journalism on matters of public importance.