

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FUND
DOCKET II – JULY 26, 2010
PROPOSED GRANT RECOMMENDATION BLURBS

The Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) responds in a timely manner to unforeseen crises or open society challenges that impact US Program’s mission; research and development in new areas of interest to USP that are not already a prominent part of grantmaking as well as initiatives that are short-term and/or of high impact through its flexible grantmaking strategies.

Grants that will be recommended for approval on Docket II represent a range of SOF priority areas, including four new grants related to the role that art and culture play in advancing social justice goals at the national level; two rapid response requests for work regarding the recent Supreme Court rulings on the case of *Citizens United* and the Court’s Juvenile Life Without Parole ruling on life sentences imposed on juveniles in non-homicide cases; one legacy grant for continued support of a project that seeks to challenge, through advocacy and litigation, the anti-prostitution pledge requirement contained in the Global AIDS Act; and, finally, two out-of-docket recommendations for projects that will support advocacy campaigns and data visualization work for partners of the SOF/TIF jointly-funded New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance that will coincide with the 5th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

In total, SOF will be making the following 10 grant recommendations with 8 appearing on the July 26th docket and 2 being presented to Ann for her approval. Grant amounts and terms are yet to be determined for a number of SOF’s recommendations.

Finally, SOF has made a gift, noted in the Legacy section of this document, on behalf of the former USP Youth Media Program of its archival materials.

Arts & Culture Advancing Social Justice

Alternate ROOTS

\$200,000 over 2 years (general support)

Alternate ROOTS, founded in 1976, is an organization based in the South and headquartered in Atlanta, GA, whose mission is to support the creation and presentation of original art in all its forms, which is rooted in a particular community of place, tradition or spirit. As a coalition of cultural workers, ROOTS members strive to be allies in the elimination of all forms of oppression. In particular, the organization is committed to social and economic justice and the protection of the natural world and addresses these concerns through its programs and services. Alternate ROOTS’ core programs include: the Community/Artist Partnership Program, supporting residencies that foster collaborations between artists and community-based organizations; Resources for Social Change, through which ROOTS provides trainings and facilitates learning exchanges related to methodologies, tools and techniques for creating social change through the arts for artists, activists and organizers; and the Annual Meeting, a week-long convening that is centered around art-making, presentation of works-in-process, professional development workshops, seminars, and musical performances. Across these programs – and as progressive community-based artists – ROOTS members are grounded in

the continuum of the citizen artist working for change, manifesting the principles of participatory democracy.

Appalshop

\$250,000 over 2 years (general support)

Founded in the coalfields of eastern Kentucky in 1969, Appalshop is a multi-disciplinary arts and education center that produces original films, video, theater, music and spoken-word recordings, radio, photography, multimedia, and print publications. Appalshop shapes its programs around the belief that communities have the right to control their own culture, land and resources and to have a voice in public life. To this end, Appalshop works to broaden and deepen cultural and civic participation in Appalachia and nationally, guided by the belief that effective place-based social change begins locally and expands nationally in coalition with others who have direct knowledge of issues. Working with a wide range of activists inside and outside the Appalachian region, Appalshop uses its multi-media resources to address complex intersectional issues that include economic justice, racial inequality, human rights, the criminal justice system and immigrant rights – holding that those who directly experience social injustice must participate in devising and enacting equitable solutions that draw upon cultural strengths. Through its Appalachian Media Institute (AMI), Appalshop supports youth artists to develop social issue-based media projects and to build their capacity as emerging leaders

National Performance Network

Amount and grant term to be determined (general support)

The National Performance Network (NPN) is a collective of 70 organizations representing a culturally and geographically diverse constituency of cultural organizers and artists. NPN member organizations are actively engaged across economic sectors in developing creative approaches to building a healthy, just, and sustainable world. Since its founding in 1985, the network has served as a support system for artists whose work confronts issues of equity and justice. NPN's work at the cultural policy level keeps doors open for its members, partners and colleagues to sit at policy-making tables, giving voice to stakeholders whose values have been historically silenced. In 2001, NPN moved its center of operations to New Orleans, where it has committed to supporting and sustaining programs based in Louisiana. Currently 25% of NPN's operating budget provides direct support to New Orleans artists and arts organizations through fiscal sponsorship services, intermediary support, and the development of a multi-tenant arts facility. In this capacity, NPN provides opportunities for national funders to support emerging art and culture organizations operating at the most grassroots level. Organizations, including Transforma Projects, *HOME, New Orleans?*, and the Porch 7th Ward Cultural Organization. NPN is also currently working to develop a Multi-Tenant Arts Facility (MTAF) which will provide infrastructure support and affordable office and studio space for six to eight New Orleans arts organizations.

The Arts & Democracy Project (fiscal sponsor: State Voices)

\$200,000 over 2 years (project support)

The Arts & Democracy Project builds the momentum of a growing movement that links arts and culture, participatory democracy, and social justice. Growing out of a 2004 national convening,

the project's purpose is to increase civic engagement and close the gap between arts and culture and sustained and strategic activism. Core program activities include: the Bridge Conversation series, facilitating and documenting dialogue between artists and other activists; the Learning Community for artists and cultural organizers who engage in collaborative inquiry; and capacity-building activities to support emerging projects and organizations that are advancing art and social justice practice. In all of its work, the project lifts up the creative power of art and culture as catalysts for action, particularly among communities of people who have been traditionally disenfranchised. Arts & Democracy takes on the most critical social issues of the day social justice challenges of the day – immigration reform, census undercounts, government accountability, and diminishing labor and educational opportunities – by engaging those communities most impacted by the issues and acknowledging these partners as leaders in the work. Through this approach, the project increases civic participation and connects grassroots practice with policymaking.

StoryCorps

\$50,000 over 1 year (renewal: general support)

StoryCorps' mission is to provide Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of their lives. StoryCorps democratizes the documentary process and puts the interview into the hands of everyday people. Since 2003, more than 50,000 people have interviewed family and friends through StoryCorps. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD and is preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. While the documentary form has traditionally focused on creating a product for distribution, StoryCorps places equal emphasis on the storytelling process itself. The program is one of the largest oral history projects of its kind, and millions of listeners tune in each week to its broadcasts on NPR's *Morning Edition*.

Legacy

Bay Area Video Coalition

Gift Agreement between SOF and BAVC

On behalf of the former US Programs' Youth Media Program, SOF is donating a substantial collection of audio-visual materials from its Youth Media Library. The library consists of OSI supported and non-supported youth made media and is being made available to BAVC for in-house academic, research and educational purposes.

Brennan Center

\$153,000 for 1 year (renewal: project support)

At the request of OSI's General Counsel, SOF proposes renewed support for the Brennan Center's Nonprofit Rights Project which continues litigation and public advocacy to challenge the anti-prostitution pledge requirement contained in the Global AIDS Act. At issue is a requirement that public health groups receiving U.S. funds under the Global AIDS Act pledge their "opposition to prostitution" in order to continue their life-saving HIV prevention work. Under this policy, recipients of U.S. aid are restricted in how they use even their private funds, impeding their ability to deliver effective prevention services to those most vulnerable to

HIV/AIDS. In 2005, several organizations already in receipt of federal funds under the Global AIDS Act contacted the Nonprofits Rights Project for counsel on how they could legally comply with the pledge requirement while still protecting their First Amendment Freedoms. In May 2005, OSI and the Alliance for Open Society International (AOSI) reached an agreement that the Nonprofit Rights Project would file a challenge to the requirement on their behalf. Given the significant costs and the demand on their staff members, the Project has received funds to conduct this litigation.

Rapid Response

Campaign Legal Center, Center for Public Accountability, Committee for Economic Development, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

\$300,000 for 1 year (project support grants) co-funded with TIF (TIF's contribution will be \$325,000) for a total of \$625,000

This rapid response request was made by the Transparency & Integrity Fund

This series of grants will support varying responses to the recent U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Citizens United* case, which upheld that corporations must be recognized as people with rights of free speech under the First Amendment. That decision recognized the right of corporations to use unlimited funds at their disposal in support of or opposition to candidates for elective office. The decision could significantly exacerbate the already pernicious role of money in politics. A project support grant to Campaign Legal Center will support its work in defense of existing campaign finance laws. A project support grant to the Center for Public Accountability and the Committee for Economic Development will support jointly coordinated work on a campaign to change corporate community attitudes and behaviors about political giving. The final project support grant for this rapid response request will support Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington's new technologically sophisticated project to investigate and expose groups like trade associations and 527's who do not disclose contributors, in the coming elections, to expose their financial backing.

Equal Justice Initiative, Inc.

\$225,000 for 1 year (project support)

This rapid response request was made by the Criminal Justice Fund

This grant will support the Equal Justice Initiative of Alabama (EJI) in its work to challenge life imprisonment without parole following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Sullivan v. Florida* and *Graham v. Florida* in May 2010. This request reflects CJF's interest to continue to support for litigation and advocacy efforts to end life without parole for juveniles. Specifically, this grant will support EJI's management of direct legal assistance in cases directly affected by the decisions; development of the next round of challenges to death-in-prison sentences imposed on children; and the provision of guidance and structure to shape new litigation for juveniles who will have only a one-year window within which to challenge their life-without-parole sentences after decisions are released.

Out of Docket Recommendations

Committee for a Better New Orleans (as fiscal sponsor for the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance)

\$23,000 over four months (project support)

The CBNO-MAC Foundation, doing business as the Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO), was created by the merger of CBNO with the Metropolitan Area Committee in 2001. As a member of the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance (NOCOG), CBNO-MAC will manage this grant for the coalition. This grant will support a time-sensitive advocacy and communications project linked to the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Capitalizing on a likely spike in local, state, and national attention to the city of New Orleans five years after the storm, NOCOG member organizations propose to engage in a multi-platform advocacy effort—including data visualizations, video production and presentation/content development skills building training—about the need for greater open governance in the city, the impacts of corrupt and inaccessible government on specific communities, and NOCOG's innovative approach to challenging the status quo.

Nonprofit Knowledge Works

\$24,000 over 6 months (project support)

Nonprofit Knowledge Works is a New Orleans, LA-based nonprofit created in 2005 by the merger of the Center for Nonprofit Resources and the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC). The organization's work is driven by the belief that evidence (data, published research, and community perspective) is an essential foundation for the development of effective social programs. The organization works with the New Orleans area nonprofit sector to increase their ability to provide information-driven, systemic and effective solutions to community problems. This project support grant will support the development of cutting edge data visualizations for use in efforts to tell the story of New Orleans five years after Hurricane Katrina by GNOCDC, members of the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance (NOCOG), the *New Orleans Lens*, other advocacy groups, and the media. Each year since Hurricane Katrina, GNOCDC has published a new edition of the *New Orleans Index*, a comprehensive guide to demographic, economic, and other information about the state of the city in the post-hurricane recovery process.