

# **How might we experiment with immersive storytelling to advance the field of journalism?**

This is an open call for ideas using immersive storytelling to discover new ways to engage audiences and advance the field of journalism.

Knight Foundation, Google News Lab and the Online News Association are partnering to launch an open call for ideas, offering up to \$35,000 in funding to test, refine and build out a project.

Virtual, augmented, mixed reality and 360 video are opening new opportunities for journalists to connect with audiences. In a news environment dominated by two-dimensional digital experiences, this technology allows people to interact with their surroundings and takes them places that they would otherwise not be able to go. At the same time they raise important technical and ethical challenges that journalists need to understand and explore.

For this open call, we want to discover ideas that grow immersive storytelling to advance the field of journalism—that inform and encourage news organizations to innovate, experiment and learn. We believe that developing lessons around this emerging area can help journalists extend and deepen their impact.

We want projects that use immersive storytelling to fuel innovation and new ideas, while addressing the many open questions facing this nascent industry. We're not prescriptive in what your project should be. We welcome all kinds of ideas, from new ways to produce and apply the technology, to the workflows, roles and skills required to create better journalism and enhanced storytelling techniques, to promoting ethics, transparency and accountability. We encourage collaboration on projects that will help advance the field. Our focus is not on funding content. We are primarily looking for projects that will yield lessons and “how-tos” for the field of journalism and encourage reporters and editors to think differently.

This challenge is open to anyone, from journalists, technologists, entrepreneurs, gamers, software developers and academics, to news organizations, startups, established businesses, nonprofits and individuals. Focused on early-stage ideas, the challenge encourages building fast, failing fast and learning from the journey.

So how might we use immersive storytelling to advance the field of journalism? From March 8 to April 10, we invite you to submit your idea to win a share of \$250,000, which we will award in June 2017. After the open call closes, we will review every entry we receive with the help of a team of outside advisers.

## Project Title \*

WitnessGEO

Web- and Application-based Creation and Distribution Portal of Geo-located Mobile AR Experiences

## Describe your project. \*

WitnessGEO will be an open-source digital platform allowing non-technical persons to create, publish, and experience AR-based stories and information anchored to locations around the world. Utilizing a mobile application or web-based tools, story creators will upload copy, links, images, audio and video to WitnessGEO and then create simple interfaces for displaying these elements to anyone with the WitnessGEO app on their phone.

WitnessGEO will enable viewers to use their phone's camera view to explore and experience real-world locations augmented by copy, video, images, diagrams, maps, audio, etc.

For example, a Viewer at the location of a historic political speech might hear audio of the speech as they viewed the location of the podium, then turn to experience images of protestors super-imposed over the square where they gathered, then tap their screen to see maps of the paths by which police arrived, or links to arrest records or video interviews of participants.

WitnessGEO assets and associated location information will be accessible via public API, and application code will be open-source, ultimately enabling and encouraging the development of customized applications based on the WitnessGEO platform.

Phase one of WitnessGEO, to which this grant will be applied, will:

- Build a working, expandable prototype of the WitnessGEO platform including server-side application and API, and web-based dashboard.
- Build a working prototype application utilizing the WitnessGEO platform (see the attached .pdf describing the anti-gun death application "Death by Gun.")
- Develop ethics-based rule set for use and public rollout of the WitnessGEO platform.

*Limit: 300 words*

## How will your project advance the field of journalism? \*

As the amount of stories and information presented and consumed via electronic media increases, the time available to individuals to both document and consume individual stories proportionally decreases. Creators are less likely to be able to adequately contextualize stories, negatively affecting consumer's understanding and emotional engagement with them.

WitnessGEO provides the ability to integrate stories and information with their real-world locations. It creates tools facilitating new and compelling ways of contextualizing news and information and potentially deepening viewers' understanding and emotional engagement with them. And it makes these tools publically accessible.

*Limit: 300 words*

## Who is your intended audience and how will they be impacted? \*

WitnessGEO's audience is journalists and documentarians, news and information consumers, as well as application developers. It's ultimate goal to enable both technical and non-technical users to create and experience geo-specific AR-based stories anywhere in the world.

*Limit: 300 words*

## What progress, if any, have you made on this project? \*

--Initial conceiving of WitnessGEO platform (see attached PDF)

--Concepting and basic UX for "Death by Gun" prototype application (see attached PDF).

--Initial discussions with potential development partners including:

1) Genosha(<http://genosha.com.ar>) a communication, design and technology agency pioneering the field of immersive storytelling in Argentina. Previous projects include the anti sex-traffic Facebook application LTA Models (<https://apps.facebook.com/ltamodels/>) and development of CMS for creating interactive immersive experiences including POC (<http://once360-qa-latam.herokuapp.com/>) produced for Disney Channel Latam.

2) FirefallPro, a development and technical consulting agency, and SS+K Lab's collaborator on numerous digital project including the award-winning "Moving Through Glass" application (<http://www.movingthroughglass.org/>) providing dance-based life tools around-the-clock for people with Parkinson's, and RaceFor (<http://racefor.it/>), an iOS application and social platform allowing any individual to raise funds for a cause by creating virtual race.

*Limit: 300 words*

## What are the obstacles to implementing your idea and how will you address them? \*

WitnessGEO concept is based on available technologies with which SS+K Labs is familiar and experienced. We anticipate two main challenges, both related to the limits of phone technology and its support networks.

1) Location Services. Both location and directional functions work with inconsistent accuracy on mobile phones. This presents challenges for the phone application to display augmented visual elements that rely on a particular view of a landscape or building. We'll experiment with functionality that captures an orientation image when Creators opt to present AR elements requiring a specific directional view. Viewers will be able to use this to orient themselves prior to viewing the AR story.

2) Data Transmission. WitnessGEO platform will be inherently dependent on cellular/internet connections to deliver assets and data to mobile users. We'll use common software strategies to accommodate poor data connections. These will include experimenting with settings that allow the app to download location information and assets to local storage on User phones. Advanced features could include settings allowing automatically downloading of assets in the background when phone is within a certain distance of a location.

*Limit: 300 words*

How much do you think your project will cost and what are the major expenses? \*

SS+K Labs Development budget: \$35,000 USD.

Hosting and Environment:

\$15,000

Discovery, Development and Implementation:

\$15,000

Design and Content:

\$5,000

*Limit: 300 words*

Organization Name (if applicable)

SS+K Labs (<http://labs.ssk.com/>)

*Limit: 300 words*

Location (City, State) \*

Shepardson, Stern, and Kaminsky

88 Pine Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10005

[ssk.com](http://ssk.com)

*Limit: 300 words*

Additional Attachments (Optional)

Acceptable file types: pdf, jpg, gif, mp4, png, mov, xls, ppt, pptx, avi, mpg, xlsx, webm.

**Choose Files**

Optional: Upload any additional files to support your project.

Select up to 3 files to attach.

No files have been attached yet.

Visual Media (Optional)

Acceptable file types: pdf, jpg, gif, mp4, png, mov, xls, ppt, pptx, avi, mpg.

**Choose Files**

Optional: Add images or other visual material to support your project.

Select up to 3 files to attach.

No files have been attached yet.

I'm 18 or over and have reviewed the privacy policy. \*

Click here to review the privacy policy: <https://www.knightfoundation.org/privacy>

Agree to Terms **I agree with Terms Of Use** \*

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