



## **Community Council Issue Paper 4: Funding**

Summary of the issue	2
GV's present funding structure: origins and approach	3
Current funding sources	6
Pros and cons of current funding sources	7
Potential new funding sources	11
Pros and cons of potential new funding sources	12
Models for the future	15
Funding source by model	21
Models for the future (comparative)	22
Chart of current funding sources	27
Funding sources (all-time)	28

## Summary of the issue

Global Voices accepts funding from foundations, individuals, mission-related partners, and several corporations. We do not seek funding from advertisers, governments, and from nonprofits funded primarily by governments with overtly political agendas. We also refuse money if funders ask us to change our work to meet their goals.

We make our funding choices on the basis of ethical criteria, avoiding sources that compromise our reputation and independence. These decisions also limit which funders we can approach, and thereby limit our potential budget.

Choosing a different ethical framework for funding could allow us to maintain or even strengthen our independence, while also expanding opportunities for new revenue.

The choices we make about funding sources strongly influence our ability to support and expand our work, and reach the goals we set for ourselves.

As we look ahead, we ask ourselves, **when it comes to funding, which sources will best serve our values and goals and help us succeed in our efforts?**

## **GV's present funding structure: origins and approach**

Global Voices first received financial support in 2005 from Reuters, while still part of Harvard University's Berkman Center for Internet & Society. Multi-year grants from Knight, Hivos and the MacArthur Foundation, grants from Google for Summits, and a loan from the Media Development Loan Foundation enabled us to separate from Harvard in 2008.

As we designed our new organization, we chose a funding model that supported maximum independence and freedom from political agendas in journalism and international development. Accordingly, we decided not to pursue governmental funds, and to limit the funds we would take from companies.

We also made decisions about funding based on potential risks associated with different sources of money. For example, we did not pursue funds from nonprofits whose money came from the U.S. government and other governments that politicize their giving, such as the National Endowment for Democracy or Freedom House. We did this because some in the community felt that being associated with a US-government funded organization would put them at risk. Many other organizations in our sector (IFEX, Article 19, Tactical Tech, Bellingcat, Ranking Digital Rights, Hivos, Access Now, the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society), with whom we partner, do receive considerable support from US and European government development agencies. And some of our editors and contributors work with these organizations.

We have received support from nonprofits backed by governments with policies shaped by internationally agreed development goals, such as Hivos in the Netherlands, which funded

us for 10 years.

In 2010 major grants from the Open Society Foundations, the Omidyar Network, the MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation helped us to expand our editorial team and build more robust financial and administrative controls. We also launched several research and editorial projects with project-based funding around this time.

In 2010 we also experimented with advertising, initially placing two ads on the site. This proved controversial. After extensive community discussion, we were unable to reach consensus, so we declined to pursue advertising. This decision played a decisive role in our development. Advertising may have caused us to shape our coverage to appeal to wealthy audiences, or to enhance traffic and readership. It would also have encouraged us to focus on reach and impact, and would have provided a noticeable funding stream for our work.

Most years, we have received donations from Google and Facebook. With the exception of the NewsFrames project, funded by Google, these donations have come with no programmatic obligations and we have typically used them to fund the Summit and core staff retreats.

Annually, we run online campaigns for small donations from individuals. This generates a small but reliable income stream.

In 2015 we began offering translation services to mission-related organizations. We now translate for 30 organizations, specializing in complex, multi-language jobs with sector-specific language. Our [partners](#) include Mozilla, Ranking Digital Rights, Access Now, First Draft, the Web Foundation, Tactical

Tech, the Committee to Protect Journalists and many others. This work provides our skilled translators with opportunities for income, helps ensure high-quality translations of material in our field, and generates unrestricted funding to support our reserves and boost our operating expenses.

Regardless of the source, we have avoided funding from organisations that would have influenced our mission and goals, or threatened the security of our contributors. For example, we have avoided funding streams focused on violent extremism. We have been cautious in pursuing funds related to misinformation, so that such support does not conflict with our editorial standards and integrity.

Our goal is to secure reliable, long-term support for our core activities that puts minimal restrictions on our goals as an organization.

## **Current funding sources**

**Foundations:** Our primary funding source. Private philanthropies, mostly from the U.S. and Europe.

**Corporate Giving:** Funding from Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Automattic, Twitter, and others. Funding comes as donations and grants, mostly from related technology sector policy offices, regional offices and philanthropic arms.

**Mission-related services (earned revenue):** Contracts and grants from media, advocacy and policy, educational, and international development partners, for editorial projects, translation, and research.

**Fiscal sponsorship:** Percentage of revenue earned from the management of mission-related partner initiatives, such as CivilServant, Majal, and Warscapes.

**Individual giving:** Small online donations.

**Major donor:** Large gifts from wealthy individuals.

## Pros and cons of current funding sources

Pro	Con
<p><b>Foundation funding</b> helps secure editorial and programmatic independence.</p> <p>We have been fortunate to receive multi-year core support from several foundations.</p> <p>Philanthropic giving often aligns with our values.</p>	<p>Most foundation funding is short-term, project funding.</p> <p>Project funding can create competition and inequity between different sections of the organization.</p> <p>Foundations often give relatively small grants, and require time-consuming administration and reporting.</p> <p>Foundations often have long lead times for applications, so are not a suitable source of funding for projects created in response to community enthusiasm or world events.</p> <p>Foundations frequently change their strategies for giving; many are not reliable long-term partners.</p> <p>The political profiles of some philanthropies create risk for those who accept their funding.</p> <p>Heavy reliance on grants makes this a disproportionately large funding stream, which threatens long-term stability.</p>

<b>Pro</b>	<b>Con</b>
<p><b>Corporate gifts</b> do not restrict or obligate us to use funds for specific purposes.</p> <p>Corporate funding helps us build advocacy relationships with industry.</p>	<p>Corporate funding needs to be strategically separate from coverage that is critical of companies.</p> <p>When we criticize corporate donors in our reporting, or advocate for changes to their policies, we need to manage potential conflicts.</p> <p>Conflict of interest could undermine our advocacy work.</p>
<p><b>Mission-related services</b> such as GV's translation services support partners in our field.</p> <p>Services contracts provide additional income to GV contributors.</p>	<p>Mission-related services can be complicated to manage.</p> <p>Services generate small amounts of revenue relative to administration costs.</p>



Pro	Con
<p><b>Fiscal sponsorship</b> provides technical, strategic and administrative support for partners in our field.</p> <p>Fiscal sponsorship arrangements contribute to unrestricted funding streams and core operational support.</p>	<p>We assume increased liability and reputational risk, as we have limited control over the activities and behavior of partner organizations.</p>
<p><b>Individual giving</b> funds can be used to support any activities.</p> <p>While individual giving takes time to build up, it can be a reliable source of long-term income.</p>	<p>Soliciting individual donations is time-consuming and requires dedicated, skilled staff.</p> <p>Individual giving could cause us to change our work to please donors.</p> <p>The individual giving space is highly competitive.</p>

Pro	Con
<p><b>Major donor giving</b> can provide substantial unrestricted funds, increasing organizational flexibility, risk-taking, and resilience.</p>	<p>Soliciting gifts from major donors is time-consuming and requires dedicated staff and resources.</p> <p>Activities to attract major donors often involve galas, exclusive events, and access to exclusive knowledge; these activities do not easily fit with our community culture.</p>

## Potential new funding sources

**Governments:** Funding from governments and intergovernmental organizations (UN, OECD, OAS, etc.), international development agencies, foreign ministries, public affairs offices, municipal governments, cultural missions (e.g. British Council, Goethe Institute, etc.), public international broadcasters, and social science and humanities research councils.

**Non-governmental organizations primarily funded by governments.** Governments have a variety of profiles and approaches to funding. Non-profits primarily funded by governments are active in our field, and may be sources of significant revenue.

**Advertising:** Revenue from ad placement, sponsored content, and other market-based mechanisms.

**Subscription:** Revenue from subscriber or member support, in return for access to premium content or special services.

**Syndication/News Exchange:** Revenue from the distribution and sale of premium content to media partners.

**Cryptocurrency ventures:** Grants, schemes and donations through cryptocurrency and blockchain investments, such as [Civil](#).

## Pros and cons of potential funding sources

Pro	Con
<p><b>Governmental funding</b> can offer large, often multi-year resources.</p> <p>Governmental funding is often awarded as part of a competitive process, and mechanisms for funding decisions can be quite transparent.</p> <p>Some countries and international organizations such as the UN organize their grantmaking based on widely accepted and public development goals, rather than political agendas.</p>	<p>Some governmental funding is very political, and requires recipients to work within frameworks with political goals.</p> <p>Funding from governments with overtly political agendas can create risk for funding recipients.</p> <p>Governmental funding can be burdensome and expensive to administer.</p> <p>Governmental funding could introduce risks for GV contributors from countries where US and EU government funding is politically controversial.</p>

Pro	Con
<p><b>Nongovernmental organizations</b> with funds from governments can provide a firewall that shields GV from government influence.</p> <p>NGOs with substantial government funds often regrant government money in our field, offering opportunities for revenue.</p>	<p>NGOs with substantial governmental support risk being seen as agents of governmental influence. Public association with them may put some contributors at risk.</p>
<p><b>Advertising</b> revenue requires no additional editorial effort.</p> <p>Advertising is a tested model in most markets, with existing systems and opportunities.</p>	<p>Advertising online is increasingly disliked by audiences, and difficult as a revenue model, given an audience that is relatively small and distributed across many regional and language markets.</p> <p>Requires specialist staff to manage campaigns, made even more complex by the multilingual nature of our work.</p> <p>Requires us to actively seek to increase our traffic in key markets, and keep track of advertising-relevant metrics.</p> <p>Advertising could move us away from our founding values of open knowledge, access to information and privacy.</p>

Pro	Con
<p><b>Subscription and syndication</b> offers alignment between the interests of our audiences/communities and our priorities and goals.</p> <p>Subscription revenues can be a consistent, independent sources of funds.</p>	<p>Building subscription and syndication services may require us to change our editorial strategy to focus on specific markets and audiences.</p> <p>Subscription and syndication services may require that we restrict access to some of our editorial products, which is counter to our values of open knowledge and access to information.</p> <p>May require a change of copyright for some of our work, moving away from Creative Commons licenses.</p>
<p><b>Cryptocurrencies</b> offer opportunities for new revenue sources that might become significant in the future.</p> <p>While still unproven, the cryptocurrency arena is a space for innovative models and learning about alternative revenues for the funding of journalism.</p>	<p>Cryptocurrencies have a steep learning curve, and require time and skills to manage.</p> <p>Many cryptocurrency schemes have failed or not delivered on promises. There is a real chance that time and energy devoted to these efforts will be lost.</p> <p>The high-risk nature of many cryptocurrency schemes mean that it is hard to plan for the use of funds for activities. Cryptocurrency investment may in the short term be best used to build up reserve funding.</p>

## **Models for the future**

In practice, we need a diversity of funding streams to reduce our reliance on any one donor or type of funding. At the same time, every funder, and every funding model, has its own set of dependencies and influence on our activities. And all funding models require specialized skills and staff.

The models below are ethical frameworks for deciding which types of funding best serve our interests; the models serve as guidelines for making decisions, rather than strict templates to be applied to all funding opportunities. The models also show which funding types we would prioritize.

## GV Classic

Emphasises independence from external influence on our work, protection of community reputation, and limiting the types of funds we accept. Primary funding sources are foundations, individuals, fiscal sponsorship, and mission-related services. Ad hoc corporate support from tech sector with no programmatic or advertising obligations. No direct governmental support or advertising.

<b>Description</b>	<b>GV as currently organized. Emphasises independence from external influence on our work, protection of community reputation. Bans certain classes of funder. Foundation support is the primary revenue source.</b>
<b>Ethical Framework</b>	We minimize the influence of funder agendas above all. We set guidelines to manage the priorities of foundation supporters and to restrict funders that want to instrumentalize our work, regardless of source.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, and mission-related services. Ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.
<b>Pros</b>	Strengthens our independence and reduces external influence.  Strengthens our editorial reputation.
<b>Cons</b>	Requires us to develop and maintain a potentially complicated process for approving funding sources.  Small number of potential funders.  Controversy over whether and when to take technology sector corporate funds.



## Ethical Funder

Evaluates funding source on the basis of ethics and behavior of the funder, regardless of source. Primary funding sources are individuals, private foundations with appropriate ethics, projects with mission-related partners, fiscal sponsorship of mission-related partners.

<b>Description</b>	<b>We prioritize ethical principles and behavior of the funder when determining whether to accept money, and reject funding from sources that fail to meet high standards, regardless of source.</b>
<b>Ethical framework</b>	We articulate clear principles for acceptable donor ethics, and only work with funders who meet those standards.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Foundations, individuals, mission-related services, fiscal sponsorship. Carefully vetted governmental and corporate support. New models introduced only if they accord with ethics policy.
<b>Pros</b>	<p>Strengthens our independence and reduces external influence.</p> <p>Strengthens our reputation.</p> <p>Popular with individual donors, subscribers, major donors, and others who value our independence.</p>
<b>Cons</b>	<p>Requires us to develop and maintain potentially complicated process for approving funding sources.</p> <p>May limit the number and type of potential funders.</p>

## Ethical Organization

All funding sources are evaluated based on the impact they have on our mission, values, and work. We accept any funding that we determine will not interfere with our goals, hurt our reputation, or threaten the security of contributors.

<b>Description</b>	<b>We prioritize independence from external agendas regarding how we can spend money, and reject funding that seeks to influence our decisions, regardless of source.</b>
<b>Ethical Framework</b>	We articulate clear principles for our own ethics and behavior, and only work with funders who do not ask us to compromise those standards.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Any funding source that meets our standards could be appropriate. Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, mission-related services and projects, governmental and intergovernmental grants, corporate support, and new models.
<b>Pros</b>	<p>Creates clear principles with which funding sources must not interfere.</p> <p>Expands potential funding pool, increasing opportunities for more resources to support our work.</p>
<b>Cons</b>	Challenging to manage reputation while taking funding from organizations and individuals with less-than-perfect ethical standards.

## Monetization

Paid Subscription and syndication. Primary funding sources are GV Classic plus subscription for some or all content, charging partners for republication, and client services.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Prioritizes generating revenue from core activities.</b>
<b>Ethical Framework</b>	Same as GV Classic, plus revenue coming directly from core activities, which demonstrates the value and impact of work, and reinforcing quality work.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Paid subscription, syndication. Mission-related services. Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.
<b>Pros</b>	Alignment between interests of our audiences/communities and our priorities and goals.  Funding is tied directly to the success of core activities.
<b>Cons</b>	Departs from our founding values of open knowledge and access to information.  Requires us to systematize and standardize our editorial outputs and workflow for a syndication market.  May require a change of copyright for some of our work, moving away from Creative Commons licenses.

## Advertising

Advertising is displayed on our websites. Primary funding sources are GV Classic model, plus ad partners that send mission-related or ethical advertising, plus other branding and marketing-based funding approaches such as sponsored content.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Builds a revenue stream by selling access to our readers and broader community.</b>
<b>Ethical Framework</b>	GV Classic plus revenue tied to visibility and reach of editorial work, demonstrating value and impact of work. Limits advertising sources based on ethics and non-abusive practices.
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Advertising on websites and other media products. Other branding and marketing-based funding approaches such as sponsored content. Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, and mission-related services. Ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.
<b>Pros</b>	New revenue source requiring no additional editorial effort.  Tested model in most markets, with existing systems and opportunities.
<b>Cons</b>	Need to manage tension between GV values and commercial values.  Advertising online difficult, as our audience is relatively small and distributed across many regional and language markets.  Requires specialist staff for sales and campaign management, especially considering our multilingual network of sites.  Requires us to actively seek substantially more traffic in key markets, and measure advertising-relevant metrics.  Departure from GV's founding values of open knowledge, access to information and privacy.  Lots of competition for a limited pool of ethical advertisers.

## Funding source by model

	Ethical Funder	GV Classic	Commercial	Monetization	Ethical Organization
Foundations	X	X	X	X	X
Individual small donor	X	X	X	X	X
Fiscal Sponsorship	X	X	X	X	X
Mission-related Services	X	X	X	X	X
Major individual donors	X	X	X	X	X
Corporate Giving	X	X	X	X	X
Government Grants	X				X
Advertising	X		X		X
Subscription	X			X	X
Syndication	X			X	X
Membership	X			X	X
Cryptocurrencies, etc.	X	X	X	X	X

## Models for the future (comparative)

### Description

GV Classic	Ethical Funder	Ethical Organization	Monetization	Advertising
<p>GV as currently organized. Emphasises independence from external influence on our work, protection of community reputation. Bans certain classes of funder. Foundation support is the primary revenue source.</p>	<p>We prioritize ethical principles and behavior of the funder when determining whether to accept money, and reject funding from sources that fail to meet high standards, regardless of source.</p>	<p>We prioritize independence from external agendas regarding how we can spend money, and reject funding that seeks to influence our decisions, regardless of source.</p>	<p>Prioritizes generating revenue from core activities.</p>	<p>Builds a revenue stream by selling access to our readers and broader community.</p>

# Ethical Framework

GV Classic	Ethical Funder	Ethical Organization	Monetization	Advertising
<p>We minimize the influence of funder agendas above all. We set guidelines to manage the priorities of foundation supporters and to restrict funders that want to instrumentalize our work, regardless of source.</p>	<p>We articulate clear principles for acceptable donor ethics, and only work with funders who meet those standards.</p>	<p>We articulate clear principles for our own ethics and behavior, and only work with funders who do not ask us to compromise those standards.</p>	<p>Same as GV Classic, plus revenue coming directly from core activities, which demonstrates the value and impact of work, and reinforcing quality work.</p>	<p>GV Classic plus revenue tied to visibility and reach of editorial work, demonstrating value and impact of work. Limits advertising sources based on ethics and non-abusive practices.</p>

# Funding Sources

GV Classic	Ethical Funder	Ethical Organization	Monetization	Advertising
<p>Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, and mission-related services. Ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.</p>	<p>Foundations, individuals, mission-related services, fiscal sponsorship. Carefully vetted governmental and corporate support. New models introduced only if they accord with ethics policy.</p>	<p>We articulate clear principles for our own ethics and behavior, and only work with funders who do not ask us to compromise those standards.</p>	<p>Paid subscription, syndication. Mission-related services. Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.</p>	<p>Advertising on websites and other media products. Other branding and marketing-based funding approaches such as sponsored content. Foundations, individual giving, major donor, fiscal sponsorship, and mission-related services. Ad hoc corporate support from tech sector.</p>



## Pros

GV Classic	Ethical Funder	Ethical Organization	Monetization	Advertising
<p>Strengthens our independence and reduces external influence.</p> <p>Strengthens our editorial reputation.</p>	<p>Strengthens our independence and reduces external influence.</p> <p>Strengthens our reputation.</p> <p>Popular with individual donors, subscribers, major donors, and others who value our independence.</p>	<p>Creates clear principles with which funding sources must not interfere.</p> <p>Expands potential funding pool, increasing opportunities for more resources to support our work.</p>	<p>Alignment between interests of our audiences/communities and our priorities and goals.</p> <p>Funding is tied directly to the success of core activities.</p>	<p>New revenue source requiring no additional editorial effort.</p> <p>Tested model in most markets, with existing systems and opportunities.</p>

# Cons

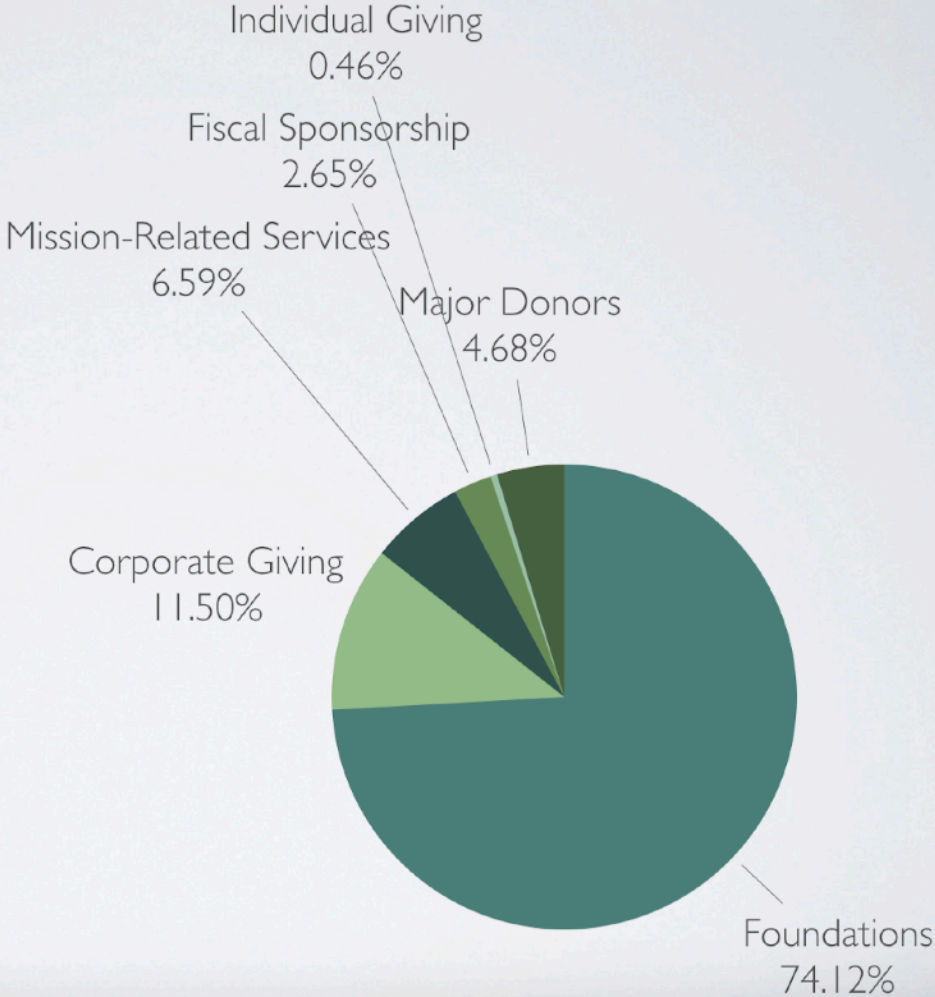
GV Classic	Ethical Funder	Ethical Organization	Monetization	Advertising
<p>Requires us to develop and maintain a potentially complicated process for approving funding sources.</p> <p>Small number of potential funders.</p> <p>Controversy over whether and when to take technology sector corporate funds.</p>	<p>Requires us to develop and maintain potentially complicated process for approving funding sources.</p> <p>May limit the number and type of potential funders.</p>	<p>Challenging to manage reputation while taking funding from organizations and individuals with less-than-perfect ethical standards.</p>	<p>Departs from our founding values of open knowledge and access to information.</p> <p>Requires us to systematize and standardize our editorial outputs and workflow for a syndication market.</p> <p>May require a change of copyright for some of our work, moving away from Creative Commons licenses.</p>	<p>Need to manage tension between GV values and commercial values.</p> <p>Advertising online difficult, as our audience is relatively small and distributed across many regional and language markets.</p> <p>Requires specialist staff for sales and campaign management, especially considering our multilingual network of sites.</p> <p>Requires us to actively seek substantially more traffic in key markets, and measure advertising-relevant metrics.</p> <p>Departure from GV's founding values of open knowledge, access to information and privacy.</p> <p>Lots of competition for a limited pool of ethical advertisers.</p>

# Current funding sources

## SGV 2015-2017 REVENUE

Foundations	\$3,170,729
Corporate Giving	\$491,938
Mission-Related Services	\$281,988
Fiscal Sponsorship	\$113,300
Individual Giving	\$19,758
Major Donors	\$200,000*
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$4,277,713</b>

\*Currently held in FGV



## Funding sources (all-time)

A Publica	Freemuse	MS/Activista
Access Now	Global Partners Digital	New Venture Fund
Adessium	Google	Newtex LLC
APCO Worldwide	Heinrich Boll	Omidyar Network
Article 19	Hivos	Open Society Foundation
Automattic	HRMI	Open Society Institute
Avina	IDRC/Berkman	OTF
Bill & Melinda Gates	Institute of Intl Education Inc.	Oxfam GB
Breaking Borders (Google)	Internews	Pulitzer Center on Crisis
Committee to Protect	IPI	Reporting
Journalists	ISN	Ranking Digital Rights
Creative Spark	Knight Foundation	Refugees United
Der Spiegel	MacArthur	Reuters
Economist Newspaper	MAVC	Story Things
Limited	MDLF	Tactical Tech
Electronic Frontier	Meedan	Templeton Foundation
Foundation	Melton Foundation	Tides Foundation
European Foundation Centre	MIT Media Lab	UNESCO
Facebook	MLDI	UNFPA
First Draft Coalition	Morningside	Web Foundation
First Draft News	Mozilla	Wikimedia
Ford Foundation	MS Action Aid	Witness
Free Press Unlimited	MS ActionAid Denmark	Yahoo