Fledgling Fund

Ms.

Jo Ellen

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**Project Name:** The Natural Gas Project

**Project Website:** T/k; organization website: [www.themediaconsortium.org](http://www.themediaconsortium.org)

Member organizations of the Media Consortium: <http://www.themediaconsortium.org/our-members/>

**Project Summary (150 words):** The Media Consortium (TMC) and Specialty Studios are seeking support for our Natural Gas Reporting Project. This collaborative Transmedia project, which includes partners *Earth Island Journal*, National Radio Project, Link TV, Chelsea Green, and Care2, will shed new light on the booming gas industry through in-depth, investigative reporting.

A critical component of the project will be media integrated with the journalism, including a Video News Reel (VNR) that will tell the stories of those impacted by Fracking for shale gas, a centralized media asset library, and embedded production support for the journalists. We will highlight positive action taken by individuals and communities seeking to hold energy companies accountable to reasonable standards of behavior.

The VNR and library will be distributed to all 58 news outlet members of the Media Consortium. Collectively we will reach over 30 million TMC subscribers/viewers of Media Consortium members including over 19 million subscribers of Care2.com.

**Key Issues (30 words, top 3 issues):** Many stories on Fracking have not yet been told, including:

* Transpartisan resistance to Fracking
* An investigation into out-of-court settlements of fracking cases
* The slipshod regulation of natural gas pipelines

**Project Goal (30 words)**: To pioneer a new type of Transmedia collaboration that will educate and engage citizens to take action in the political debates over Fracking and expand the leverage of TMC.

**Social Change (150 words):** No matter who wins the 2012 election, “natural” gas will be on the top of the nation’s energy menu. Yet a range of academic studies and media reports have concluded that Fracking is incompatible with protecting the environment and public health [see <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/energy-environment/natural-gas/index.html>] .

The frack-gas rush occurring across the United States has raised serious questions about this almost completely unregulated industry, including how much it is contributing to groundwater pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and seismic activity. Human health impacts associated with natural gas extraction are especially worrisome. In short: Are we making ourselves sick to keep the lights on?

Our project will educate the public about these risks, changing the conversation about Fracking. Even more, we are already working with activists to ensure that our video will be designed to engage citizens in action via Care2 petitions, educational materials, and screenings.

**Project timeline (100 words):** This project is currently in development. A producer will work with reporters from Earth Island Journal and National Radio Project in Spring/Summer 2013. Post-production will take place in Fall/Winter 2013, with community engagement and outreach beginning in Fall 2013, continuing through release in Winter 2013, and afterward through 2014.

Note, however, that the Transmedia nature of this project means that content will be released as early as Spring 2013 to accompany digital stories, and that outreach and engagement efforts will begin with other partners in Summer 2013 and be ongoing.

**Amount Requested:** $50,000

**Impact of Funds (200 words):** Fledgling Fund dollars will pay for (1) an Executive Producer and Producer team with extensive Transmedia experience to provide critical content development and management across all channels, and (2) creation of the video news reel and media asset library and website to host materials produced by the Natural Gas Project so that they are accessible to activists.

This investment will be highly leveraged by TMC. News reel video will accompany Earth Island Journal’s text-based investigative reports, and made available to all 58 Media Consortium members to illustrate their pieces on Fracking. News reel audio will be used as the basis for at least two National Radio Project specials and as part of two Link TV segments. Finally, news-reel video will accompany Care2 petitions crafted precisely as calls to action based on the news-reel content, engaging their 19 million members.

What is especially exciting is that (1) these efforts will roll out over an extended 24 month period and enable us to be ready for breaking news around Fracking, and (2) in the end, we will have a more interconnected and leveraged Media Consortium providing a more powerful platform to benefit all new independent media projects.

**Project Leadership (one sentence per person)**

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, who serves as project manager for the Natural Gas Project, is the Executive Director of the Media Consortium.

Steve Michelson is Executive Producer at Specialty Studios and had over 40 years of content development and distribution experience across all media.

Craig Malina is Director of Business Affairs for Specialty Studios and has over 15 years experience managing media rights and crafting collaborative distribution and outreach partnerships.

**Funding Status (other funds):**

* $15,000 in hand from a metrics project, designed to evaluate the impact of collaborative projects –Deutsch Foundation
* $5,000 requested for a media policy project, designed to chart the intersection of media policy and environmental policy—Media and Democracy Fund (proposal stage)
* $100,000 requested for the text, audio, and TV portion of the Natural Gas Reporting Project--Park Foundation (proposal stage)
* $50,000 requested for the Natural Gas Reporting Project—11th Hour (LOI stage)
* $50,000 requested for the Natural Gas Reporting Project—Heinz Foundation (LOI stage)

**Previous Funding from Fledgling?**

Specialty Studios has been awarded two prior grants from Fledgling for ***Burning the Future*** and ***Cafeteria Man***.