

**“Outing the Corporations” Investigative Reporting Proposal**

**Application Deadline: July 1**

**Return to: erin@themediaconsortium.com**

**Project Description:**

The continuing economic devastation wreaked by the Great Recession, profitable American corporations legally dodging income taxes during a fiscal crisis, and the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United v. FEC* decision that overturned decades of precedent to allow direct, unlimited and often secret corporate spending during elections, all have struck chords of deep popular disgust among millions of Americans.

The “We the People Project” is working with progressive media, labor, policy groups, business, netroots and grassroots organizations, cultural figures, and elected officials to coordinate an autumn 2011 campaign that will dramatically raise awareness of how corporate power lies at the root of so much of current policy.

**We the People is partnering with The Media Consortium to support special investigative coverage that tracks corporate influence on American politics.** Reporting will be produced between September 19 and November 2, at the one-year mark ahead of the 2012 election. Throughout the development and production process, We The People will work with TMC members and allies to create a “media crescendo” moment—a moment when the stories produced by TMC members and the issue of corporate influence itself become a hot topic across all media—that can be used by advocacy groups and the netroots to create social action. In addition, We The People will feature TMC members’ stories as part of the high-profile live event it is planning for late fall.

**Logistical Details and Program Requirements**

Project Manager: Tracy Van Slyke

TMC Applicants will be chosen by TMC staff

Logistical Details

* Project Duration: 4 months
* Internal Launch: July 1
* Public Launch: September 19
* End: Nov. 2
* Disbursement amount: $2,500-$7,500 per accepted applicant
* Number of groups: Between 5-10 media organizations, to be determined based on applications.
  + Proposals for collaborations among two or more media organizations are welcome and accepted. Jointly fill out the application and note the roles and budget of each organization. Larger funding allocations will be more likely awarded to collaborations among media organizations.

Requirements: In order to participate in and be compensated for this project, your organization must fulfill the following requirements.

Editorial:

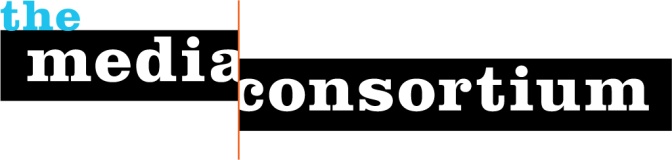
* Publish 1-2 **investigative pieces** during the September 19-November 2 window under the broad topic of corporate influence and politics. Organizations participating in this program should begin editorial planning as soon as they are accepted into the project. We are not looking for columns or opinion pieces. We want investigative reports that are going to break and drive news. Examples include:
  + Tracking corporate money on national/state elections or legislation
  + Tracking corporate money/interference on key political issues such as the environment, immigration, banking/economy
  + Who are the next or similar Koch brothers?
  + How is Wall Street gearing up for 2012 election?
  + Ongoing impact of Citizens United
  + And more…
* Pair a few investigative piece(s) with at least one additional “story telling” device. i.e. video, data visualization, podcast, graphics/charts.
* Integrate community and creative engagement tactics for developing, producing, promoting, sharing AND/OR discussing your investigative reports to help with broader discussion, and overarching impact.

Promotional:

* Promote all reporting from your organization on your social networks (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). You will also send out press releases, e-newsletters and participate in any other promotional efforts as needed.
* Work with We The People in advance of publication to support story promotion and booking of your reporter(s) on other media. This includes sharing story planning/development on a regular basis with key We The People and Media Consortium representatives.

Other Requirements:

* Credit The Media Consortium and We The People for supporting the reporting. Exact language TBD.
* Allow We The People to post, link and/or reprint produced pieces for online and/or print toolkits.



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**Application Deadline: July 1**

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*Application Length Limit: 4 pages*

Name: *\_\_\_Brooke Jarvis\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

Title: *\_\_\_\_Web editor\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

Organization: *\_\_\_\_YES! Magazine\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

Will you be responsible for overseeing the program at your organization? *yes*

If no, please enter name and title here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you have read and agree to the requirements to the program, please mark X here: *\_\_\_\_\_X\_\_\_\_\_\_*

1. Why is your organization interested in reporting on the topic of corporate influence on our democracy?   
350 words or less

*YES! has covered the growth of corporate power—and the pushback against it—throughout our 15-year history. Our editorial goal is to reframe the biggest problems of our time in terms of their solutions. But corporations use their power over our political and economic systems to consistently undermine those solutions—funding climate deniers, fighting health care reform, or writing laws that gut or privatize public resources.*

*We regularly cover amazing stories of individuals, businesses, communities, and governments making changes for the better. But we recognize that impacts of these actions aren’t big enough to counter the enormity of the problems we face. A major reason for that is the dominance of corporate power, which stands in the way of our ability to make many of the decisions on which our future well-being depends rationally or democratically.*

*We feel that our focus on solutions means that YES! has a unique role to play in this partnership. While it’s important to uncover the extent of the corruption that* Citizens United *has enabled, we feel it’s also important to tell the story of what’s possible in a functioning democracy—and how we might recreate ours.*

2. Has your organization reported on this topic in the past?  
*Yes \_\_\_\_X\_\_\_\_*

*No \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

If so, please share headlines and links to past reporting over past year

*“A Crisis of Democracy: Real Solutions to the BP Oil Spill”*[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/citizens-united-v.-federal-election-commission*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/citizens-united-v.-federal-election-commission)

*“Real People v. Corporate People: The Fight Is On”*[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/water-solutions/real-people-v.-corporate-people-the-fight-is-on*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/water-solutions/real-people-v.-corporate-people-the-fight-is-on)

*“The 28th Amendment? Interview with Donna Edwards”*

[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/water-solutions/interview-with-donna-edwards*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/water-solutions/interview-with-donna-edwards)

*“Citizens United?”*[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/brooke-jarvis/citizens-united*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/brooke-jarvis/citizens-united)

*“After the Campaign Cash, the Backlash”*

[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/brooke-jarvis/after-the-campaign-cash-the-backlash*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/brooke-jarvis/after-the-campaign-cash-the-backlash)

*“Give Us Our Law Back: Montana Fights to Stop Corporate Corruption”*[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/give-us-our-law-back-montana-fights-to-stop-corporate-corruption*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/give-us-our-law-back-montana-fights-to-stop-corporate-corruption)

*“Tackling Corporate Power, One Town at a Time”*[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/tackling-corporate-power-one-town-at-a-time*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/tackling-corporate-power-one-town-at-a-time)

*“Will the Real Voice of Small Business Please Stand Up?”*

[*http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/will-the-real-voice-of-small-business-please-stand-up*](http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/will-the-real-voice-of-small-business-please-stand-up)

3. Please provide a brief outline of a) the likely topic(s) that your media organization(s) would focus on and why. Let us know what scoop you hope to uncover, scandal you hope to lay bare, or top-secret information you want to blow up.

*The following are proposals for long-form, in-depth articles. We’re open to commissioning one or two.*

*1. What does the alternative look like?*

*Corporate influence on democracy has become so entrenched that it can be difficult to imagine what could be possible in a less encumbered political system. In the U.S., some states place more checks on corporate involvement in politics than others. We plan a deeply researched article examining state policies to find out how they restrict corporate influence; how successful those policies are; what their impact on elections and legislation has been (particularly in terms of economic inequality, public services, and environmental protection); and potentially, how they could be improved.*

*2. Why corporate money in politics isn’t good for business, either.*

*In the story of the backlash against campaign cash, an underreported component is the extent to which much of the business community is unhappy with the new normal of corporate political involvement. We plan an article telling the story of businesses that are recognizing the threat of being squeezed out by corporate giants as they gain more power to influcence government regulation and incentives. The article would detail the business case for opposing the unleashing of corporate money, as well as the way business leaders are stepping up to oppose it: for example, by deaffiliating with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or joining together to provide a counterargument to corporate lobbying.*

*3. Debunking the “job killer” myth*

*In their efforts to stop regulation of all kinds, the Chamber of Commerce and other front groups for corporations are using their now-larger mouthpiece to trumpet the idea that regulations meant to protect the environment, worker safety, and public health will “kill jobs”—no small accusation as the recession continues without significant job growth.*

*This is, however, a prediction that such groups have made about proposed regulations, over and over, for decades. In most cases, not only have they been wrong about the effect on jobs, the laws they opposed have become the basic safeguards that we take for granted. We propose a deeply researched article taking on the misinformation campaign directly by detailing that history of false claims—and debunking it with the real story of how many lives and jobs are saved by keeping corporate power in check. The piece would also detail how much money corporations are spending to stop such regulations and how much they stand to gain by defeating them.*

4. Please provide a sketch of how your organization(s) would produce the investigative piece(s), including

a) primary and secondary platform(s) (text/web)

b) Production element(s) video/audio/visual/text (or combo)

c) Community Engagement tactics

d) Other

1. *Primary platform will be text articles published under a creative commons license on* [*www.yesmagazine.org*](http://www.yesmagazine.org)*, supplemented by photos and infographics.*
2. *We will also produce an animated infographic or video to accompany each selected piece. E.g. for the third topic listed above, will compare quotes from the Chamber of Commerce and others about the predicted negative impact of regulatory legislation to its actual impact. The infographics will be published on www,yesmagazine.org, as well as available for embed and circulation via other sites and platforms. Sample style from animator Alex Clark here:* [*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oox1dFlet40*](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oox1dFlet40)
3. *Will promote resulting content to email newsletter subscribers, Twitter followers, and Facebook fans, as well as targeted outreach to other media outlets, aggregators, and bloggers for repost.*

5. Please provide a simple budget breakdown in a separate document clarifying what resources you will invest on reporting, production and impact. It’s OK to produce a 2-scenario budget (low-end and high-end). You may use the accompanying form or provide one of your own.

*Attached.*

6. Please provide a quick snapshot of your audience:

*Size: (i.e. print, online, viewers, listeners e-list, twitter followers, Facebook fans, etc…)*

*Print reach: 180,000 readers/quarter (We currently have 36,000 subscribers and print 60,000 magazines each quarter for subscribers, newsstand sales, and outreach. This takes into account multiple readers per issue).  
Web visitors: Average of 200,000/month in 2011*

*Email newsletter subscribers: 58,000+*

*Twitter followers: 19,400*

*Facebook fans: 14,000*

*Geographic Distribution: We reach subscribers around the globe with the print magazine and with our daily online news coverage, but the majority live within the United States.*

*Demographics: We write in a practical style and use accessible language to appeal to the widest possible audience. Reader surveys indicate that the majority of YES! readers tend to be educated, politically progressive, and interested in sustainability and social justice. While many of our print subscribers tend to be in their 50s and 60s, our rapidly expanding online readership includes many more readers in their 20s and 30s.*

*What kinds of influentials in your audience would be receptive to this topic? (i.e. activists, policy makers, high number of retweeters, press contacts)*

*YES! stories covering Citizens United and freedom from corporate power tend to be wildly popular with our core readership, which includes activists, philanthropists, educators, journalists, policy-makers, and faith leaders. John Perkins, Naomi Klein, and Michael Moore are among the people who have recently reposted YES! articles. Our online articles regularly get reposted on news aggregator sites such as Alternet, Truthout, the Huffington Post, and Common Dreams, and have also been cited in major publications such as the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times,the Wall Street Journal, and the Economist. Our work has been featured on The Thom Hartmann Program, Democracy Now!, GRITtv with Laura Flanders, Oregon Public Media, NOW with David Brancaccio, Alternate Radio with David Barsamian, and other outlets.*

*On the topic of corporate power, we have partnered with the Institute for Policy Studies, the New Economy Working Group, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Move to Amend, Public Citizen, Free Speech for People, Common Cause, 350.org, the Community Environmenal Legal Defense Fund, and other organizations.*

*Our longstanding commitment to social change movements has created a great deal of goodwill and solidarity for YES! among social change networks throughout the US; these organizations and highly engaged individuals are eager to support YES! in sharing stories far and wide.*

7. Please provide a brief overview of your Public Relations capabilities, including social networking strategies/opportunities, press and ally relationships/contacts and what you could do to promote your reporting.

*The YES! media and outreach team regularly contacts hundreds of print, online, and broadcast journalists, specially targeting those who are interested in a specific topic such as corporate power. They send press releases and targeted notices to selected members of our media contact database, which includes 200+ regular contacts in print/online/radio/TV, independent & traditional media, and niche bloggers.*

*They also host live Twitter chats and tweet jams. More than 33,000 people read, discuss, and share our stories through Facebook and Twitter.*

*They promote individual articles to our 33,000 social media fans and followers as soon as the story is published on yesmagazine.org, which is also a regular source for reposting, sharing, and retweeting articles widely across the Web.*

8. Do you have a reporter already on staff or a freelancer identified that covers this beat?

If so, please note their name

*\_\_\_\_Potential writers: Brooke Jarvis; Donald Cohen; Raj Patel, Bill McKibben\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***Sample Budget Document**

Please fill in this worksheet as a part of your application.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ONE ARTICLE & ASSOCIATED CONTENT |  | TWO ARTICLES & ASSOCIATED CONTENT | | |
| **REVENUE** |  |  | | |
| Requested amount: | 2,500 | 5,000 | | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| **How many pieces will you produce?** | 1 | 2 | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| **EXPENSES** |  |  | | |
| Content Creation |  | | |  | |
| Reporter/Research | 1,500 | 3,000 | | |
| Graphic Journo/Video Production & Editing | 750 | 1,500 | | |
| Assignment/Editing/Project Oversight | 750 | 1,250 (oversight overlap) | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| Promotion |  |  | | |
| Media Outreach/  Social Media Promotions | 500 | 700 (promotion overlap) | | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| TOTAL PROJECT COST | 3,500 | 6,450 | | |
| IN-KIND RESOURCES | 1,000 | 1,450 | | |
|  | | |