



THE BME CHALLENGE

Black Male Engagement Initiative

Request for Proposal | National Launch Implementation Partner | 2012-2013

The BME Challenge 2012

Request for Proposal

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Overview

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is searching for a creative, strategic partner to implement the BME Challenge in up to 8 target cities. The National Implementation Partner (NIP) will lead the community organizing portion of this project.

A key component of this work will be the hiring, training, and managing of local community teams in each of these cities. The NIP will be responsible for mapping and engaging key stakeholders in each city, securing Phase One entry targets in the form of personal stories, securing Phase Two entry targets in the form of grant applications and support, managing the grant review process, and running local recognition events.

About BME

Black Male Engagement, or BME (pronounced “be me”), is an initiative to recognize, engage, and inspire more black men to strengthen their communities.

Black men and boys are assets to their communities, and have long been engaged in addressing the issues and opportunities affecting their neighborhoods. It’s time these unsung heroes be recognized and celebrated. Through their efforts, these black men and boys will inspire and encourage others to become more positively engaged.

In 2011, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Open Society Foundations’ Campaign for Black Male Achievement joined forces to launch the Black Male Engagement Challenge (BME), aimed at demonstrating the existing positive role of black males, celebrating their efforts publicly, creating a BME community by connecting them to each other, and increasing the impact of the community-building efforts in which these men were already engaged.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. The foundation believes that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. BME is part of the foundation’s Black Males Initiative, which engages black men and boys in strengthening their communities. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

About the Open Society Foundations

Active in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education. For more, visit www.soros.org/cbma.

Building a BME Community: 2011-2012 Pilot Project in Detroit and Philadelphia

Launched as a pilot project on August 1, 2011 in Detroit and Philadelphia, the BME Challenge was created to identify and engage black men who, through their service to their communities, inspire others to take action and support their efforts to mobilize their local communities regardless of race or gender.

The BME audience includes men and boys ranging in age from 14 to over 65, with the highest concentration in the 25 to 50 age range.

Context Partners, a national consulting company, was retained to research and develop a program design and process for implementation. Their first step was to interview more than 60 stakeholders in Detroit and Philadelphia, and with their help and feedback, created the challenge design.

How the pilot worked

The BME Challenge pilot consisted of two distinct phases. In Phase One, entrants submitted their stories of service. In Phase Two, entrants competed for funding to support the work they were doing in their communities.

Phase One: Identify and Celebrate

In Phase One, black men in Philadelphia and Detroit were asked to come forward and share their stories of service. The greater community also came forward and nominated men deserving of recognition for their good work. These stories were featured on the BME website, inviting the community to share their own stories and vote for those they found most inspiring by giving them a “thumbs up.” Entrants were celebrated in a public event in each city in October 2011. These events provided an opportunity for community members and organizations to show their appreciation for service—big, small, and often unrecognized.

Phase Two: Connect and Support

The Phase One entrants were invited to attend a networking event to connect with fellow BME participants. Only men age 18 and up who submitted stories in Phase One were eligible to apply for grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 to support their efforts. Entrants and nominators then voted on which projects should receive funding. Taking the community's recommendations into consideration, the Knight team selected 20 promising projects across both cities. Grant recipients were notified January 4, 2012, and were publicly announced January 24, 2012. Funded projects have up to one year to be completed.

Results of the pilot

The goal for the pilot was to recognize and support those individuals who had the highest likelihood of mobilizing their communities to improve their city. This recognition and self-identification allowed many of these men to connect with each other for the first time. It also opened a new dialogue within the cities. For example, while convening in Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter articulated, “This is the type of community we need to see more often.” While anecdotal, community feedback shows that there is real demand for BME as participants expressed a high level of gratitude and interest in future participation. BME met this excitement and appreciation by funding projects.

Statistics from the two-city challenge in Detroit and Philadelphia:

- 2,082 stories shared
- 151 grant applications
- 20 BME Grantees
- \$443,150 granted for projects to be implemented in 2012

Of the 2,000 men who submitted their stories, 151 applied for grants to support their initiatives. They chose the level of support they sought, with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Given that a portion of the target audience was generally unfamiliar with the grant process, the grant application was simplified to reduce the barriers to entry. Grant submission support was provided in the form of information sessions, workshops, webinars, and direct assistance from BME staff. Such efforts proved critical, with 54% of grant applicants seeking help in some way.

The result of these efforts included identification of a qualified and inspiring group of grantees, some of whom have rarely, if ever received funding, and the kernel of a new approach to the granting process where communities have a voice in which initiatives are supported.

BME awarded a total of 20 grants, 10 in each city, totaling \$443,150. Winners from year one are teachers, pastors, businessmen and writers, and include men who served in prison before choosing to help others. The Year One grants enable the winners to scale their positive impact in their communities across a range of issues including youth development, literacy, self-expression, life skills/healthy choices, business skills, neighborhood beautification, mentorship training, autism, LGBT advocacy, HIV/AIDS advocacy, cross-generational relationship development and veteran support.

Overview of National Launch

Building on the success and the lessons learned from the pilot programs in Detroit and Philadelphia, the Knight Foundation is seeking a creative, strategic National Implementation Partner (NIP) to launch The BME Challenge in up to 8 cities in the summer of 2012.

Through this expansion, Knight Foundation is looking to foster a network of black men as well as local community members and national organizations that will become members of BME. The goal of this network is to build a thriving membership dedicated to effecting positive change in their communities. The NIP will implement and test a membership structure as part of the national launch.

Success will be defined, driven and described by the BME community. The NIP will play an active role in supporting the community to describe success and then helping them achieve that success leveraging the challenges and membership structure. At the end of 2012 the eight BME cities will have surfaced a community of black male “doers” who commit to making their communities tangibly stronger.

The 2012 BME Challenge cities are anticipated to be:

- **Akron, Ohio**
- **Baltimore, Maryland**
- **Boston, Massachusetts**
- **Charlotte, North Carolina**
- **Detroit, Michigan ***
- **Macon, Georgia**
- **Miami, Florida**
- **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania ***

The BME Challenge National Implementation Partner

The Knight Foundation is seeking a National Implementation Partner who will oversee and manage the launch of The BME Challenge in the 8 target cities.

Scope of Work

Produce a Community Overview

- Develop an initial community scan to create an overview of the city i.e., overall population, African-American population, etc.
- Identify key community organizations and resources to help identify local champions who will be key to the success of this program

Identify Local Champions and Key Stakeholders

- Reach out to elected officials and county/city department leadership, educators, non-profit and community foundation leaders, religious leaders, local fraternity leaders, corporate leaders, media leadership
- Build relationships to introduce the program and help build momentum in the community

Develop a Management Plan to Implement BME Challenge

- Identify Community Leadership and Community Team
- Carefully plan and implement:
 - a. Phase I: Storytelling Challenge
 - i. Capture stories including soliciting nominations from local community members
 - ii. Ensure upload of stories to the website within 24 hours
 - iii. Community building
 - 1. Testing membership structure
 - 2. In-person events, as appropriate
 - 3. Use of social media
 - iv. Facilitate selection of challenge winners
 - b. Phase II: The Grant Application Process
 - i. Solicit grant applications from storytellers
 - ii. Provide technical assistance for completing grant applications
 - iii. Manage the submission of grant applications for selection by The Knight Foundation
- Confirm a Technical Process and Plan
 - a. Organize the resources to manage a database of local champions, BME members, media outlets, etc.
 - b. Manage the training of staff for work on the Community Teams for talking points, filming, etc. (in collaboration with Knight Foundation)
 - c. Manage daily uploading of stories on the website
 - d. Manage the timely collection of data for final reporting

Scope of Work, continued

- Develop a Planning Calendar to Implement BME Challenge
 - a. Organize a launch event to announce the program
 - b. Programs in the BME Challenge cities could include:
 - A series of networking events to introduce program, encourage storytelling and describe the grant process
 - Promoting community events to gain local exposure and recruitment
 - Utilizing local volunteer opportunities for connection and engagement
 - Recruiting corporate partners to host events and gatherings
 - Engaging religious leaders to spread the word and reinforce the program
 - c. Host final Leadership Awards announcement event
- Work with the strategic communications partner to help execute a Communications Structure and Plan¹
 - a. Adopt key messages
 - b. Participate in communications training for staff and contractors
 - c. Facilitate partnerships with local media, i.e. local newspaper, TV stations, radio stations
 - d. Distribute materials about the program, PSAs, etc.
 - e. Execute social media outreach and management plan

Manage Grant Application Process

- Describe and market grant opportunity from the outset of the project.
- Identify a local team of non-profit leaders and grant writing professionals to work one-on-one with BME participants who may wish to submit grant proposals
- Distribute grant applications to BME participants.
- Hold workshops and webinar on grant application process.

Membership Structure Partner

Knight Foundation has retained the services of Context Partners (www.contextpartners.com) in designing a membership structure for BME to increase the participation and commitment of black men, local groups, and national organizations to strengthen their communities. The membership structure is being designed as a key tool that will allow the NIP to recruit challenge entrants and retain them as community members. The NIP will implement elements of the membership structure as part of the storytelling and grants challenge and afterwards as appropriate.

The NIP will be responsible for the following:

- Participate in a training session for implementation of membership structure
- Help inform the development of a meaningful membership structure through participation in a limited number of interviews and provision of community data and metrics
- Commit to piloting the membership structure in all BME cities

¹**Note: Communications Partner** - Knight Foundation is retaining a strategic communications partner to work with the BME team. (See Benchmarks and Deliverables for detailed information.)

Timeline

April–June 2012

April 9	Disseminate RFP and national ad placement
April 17 EOB	Notify Project Manager of your Intent to Participate in one of the informational webinars
April 19: Noon to 1:00 PM ET	Informational webinar for NIP Applicants
April 26: Noon to 1:00 PM ET	Informational webinar for NIP Applicants
May 4	Proposal deadline for a National Implementation Partner
Week of May 7	Proposals reviewed
Week of May 14	NIP Finalists available for interviews
May 21	NIP selection process
June 5	National Implementation Partner selected

June-August 2012

- Build partnerships with key stakeholders in each target city
- Develop materials and a roll out plan for each city
- Design a calendar for the overall project
- Plan and hold pre-launch events in each city
- Plan national press announcement for the Project Launch
- Participate in membership structure training

September 2012 (Post Labor Day)

- Implement major national launch announcement; maximize media coverage
- Launch BME nationwide (up to 8 cities)
 - Hold an announcement event in each city (BME Month) (1 month/2 cities/week)
 - Call for stories on the web
 - On-line grant contest: simplify the application
 - Implement resource bank and “membership” programs in each city
- Test membership structure

October 2012

- Selection review process for Leadership Award grants and follow due diligence process
- Provide feedback on membership structure to Context Partners

November 2012

- Commit to continuing support of the membership structure in all BME cities as appropriate
- Finalists selected for Leadership Award grant pool in all participating cities

January 2013

- Announce Leadership Award Grants (\$800K - \$1.6M)
- Projects implemented through 2013

Benchmarks and Deliverables

Role of The Knight Foundation and other project support

The Office of Traban Shorters, Vice President Communities of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation will be the primary contact for the National Implementation Partner (NIP). An internal Hub Director from the Knight Foundation will be appointed to act as the primary liaison with the NIP.

Each potential BME city has an established Knight Foundation Program Director or Lead Staff (in non-Knight Foundation cities) who will act as a:

- Connector of people and resources during the initial phase and ramp up
- Information resource on major events such as launch and awards ceremony
- Reviewer of grant applications

Context Partners will provide a simple membership structure to help reinforce the networks established during The BME Challenge.

Role of the Communications Partner:

Knight Foundation has retained Hattaway and Company as a strategic communications partner to work with the BME team. They anticipate Hattaway's activities will include, but not be limited to the following:

- Developing and refining existing key messages for BME and the target audiences: key messages would be used as a basis for talking points, collateral, ads and more.
- Communications training: In each city, the challenge has several points of contact with the public, including Knight Foundation program directors, outreach teams who collect stories, and the local PR firms. As BME expands to new cities, it is particularly important that all stakeholders are working and speaking from the same play book. We envision trainings for all staff – whether in each individual city or larger gatherings in one or two cities – in the summer of 2012.
- National media pitching: With the expansion, Knight Foundation would like to seek coverage of BME from national ethnic and mass media. Hattaway will develop the pitch, identify targets and seek coverage, particularly toward the end of the story gathering phase in the fall of 2012.

Role of the National Implementation Partner (NIP)

The National Implementation Partners (NIP) will be responsible for implementing the BME Challenge in up to 8 target cities. A key component of this work will be the hiring, training, and managing of local community organizing teams. The NIP will be responsible for mapping and engaging key stakeholders in each city, securing Phase One entry targets in the form of personal stories, securing Phase Two entry targets in the form of grant applications and support, managing the grant review process, and running local recognition events. Finally, the NIP will implement and test a membership structure as part of the national launch.

The NIP will meet these minimum benchmarks in the target cities:

- 10 local partners per city
- 500 BME Members per city in the new cities, 1,200 each in Detroit and Philly
- 100 BME Leadership Award Applications per city

Budget and Fees

We have established a maximum budget for this effort of \$400,000 inclusive of expenses.

Please provide an overview of your anticipated expenses for each element of your plan, including management fees, local staffing fees, events, marketing materials, etc.

Knight Foundation will also contribute the following resources to BME beyond what we've budgeted for the National Implementation Partner:

- Web site maintenance and updates
- Communications, branding and advertising
 - National agency: Hattaway and Company retained to support and coordinate work of local agencies
 - National advertising buys
 - Local PR agency fees
 - Local advertising buys
- Assessment
 - Pilot Project
 - National Launch Project

Proposal Content and Format Requirements

Tendering agencies must:

- Indicate their intent to participate on one of the informational webinars by the EOB on April 17 by notifying the Project Manager below.
- Submit a proposal (concise and to the point strongly preferred) that will outline the overall approach to the national launch of The BME Challenge.
 - Please describe your plan to launch the program in the 8 target cities.
 - Describe the team structure you would assemble to manage this project.
- Provide links to existing work that is similar in scope or topic.
- Provide case studies or examples of previous experience that demonstrates the capacity of your organization and the lead individuals who will manage this project.
- Please clearly define the leadership team you will provide to create a high level of trust and connection to each local community; keep the process moving; follow a strict timeline, and meet the deadlines for the video stories and the grant process.
- Include specific information about agency staff who will be working on this project (title, function, education, experience, current and past experience, level of responsibility, etc.). Please include names of other agencies, subcontractors and consultants who would work on this project.
- Demonstrate strategic thinking and understanding of the specific challenges at hand.
- Include accounts and contacts for references.

Please forward your electronic proposal to me by 5:00 PM EST on May 4, 2012.

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Questions can be directed to Abbey Chase by email or by calling 305-379-0800.

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Additional Resources:

www.BMECHALLENGE.org

BME Challenge: Year One Retrospective Analysis January 2012
Prepared by Context Partners