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LocalWiki in South Alabama

It's never been easier to find out what's happening on the other side of the world in near real-time and from almost anywhere. But despite advances in global connectivity, an embarrassingly small fraction of knowledge about the very communities we live in can be found online in any meaningful, accessible or open form.

[LocalWiki](#) is a non-profit, grassroots effort to collect, share and open the world's local knowledge. We build online knowledge commons that allow anyone, anywhere to be able to learn about where they live — their local government, the history of their neighborhoods, streets, social movements, noteworthy local figures, social services, schools, non-profits — every facet of life in their community.

We believe that giving people access to collaborative tools to create and share knowledge about local issues empowers them to make change in their communities. In communities that have robust LocalWiki projects (eg: [Davis](#), [Oakland](#), [Ann Arbor](#)) we've seen that residents don't just use information to learn about their community; they translate collaboration on local knowledge into collaborative action in their local community.

Starting in Davis in 2004 with the Davis Wiki, LocalWiki is now in over 70 communities worldwide. We've helped seven focus communities start LocalWiki projects and want to give many more people the opportunity to participate in the project.

LocalWiki has a simple, intuitive design that allow anyone to start reading and contributing, even if they have very little experience with computers and/or the internet.

Here are a few examples of how residents have been using LocalWiki in their communities:

- Davis, CA: Residents engaged in the planning and discussion of a railroad fence project all the way from the rumor stage to the current project status. Residents planned and discussed events about the fence and showed up in large numbers at City Council meetings to speak about the plans.
- Grand Rapids, MI: Mapping every building with historical and contemporary significance.
- Oakland, CA: Creating over 300 entries on local history, much of it original archival research published directly to the Oakland LocalWiki.

- Rochester, NY: Documentation of past, present, and planned city development projects over several years.
- Raleigh, NC: Mapping a network of nature paths throughout the city.

We propose the creation of a LocalWiki in South Alabama that will serve as an online knowledge commons to connect people, information, and ideas. It will allow community members and local service providers to learn and share everything there is to know about their community.

The project will involve site setup, facilitation of initial content-seeding, and a sustained outreach program, all with the aim of achieving lasting viability by cultivating community ownership of the project.

Depending on the size of the commitment from the Community Foundation of South Alabama, specific project activities will include:

- Site set-up and configuration
- Potential custom development work -- e.g. importing relevant data from the South Alabama Community Information Network and other open data projects.
- A multi-month project buildout and sustained outreach program with a focus on developing long-term sustainability in the local community. Length of outreach program would depend on level of support.
- Landscape-mapping and planning to identify potential local community collaborators (libraries, local historical societies, local civic groups, non-profits and charities, hackerspaces and other innovation hubs, schools, etc.). Outreach to and collaboration with local community collaborators identified through the landscape-mapping process.
- A number of visits by LocalWiki staff to conduct hands-on training and lead events (number of visits depends on level of support). Number of visits would depend on level of support.
- Assistance and resources for local volunteer organizers to shape and organize their own outreach events (sample events include meetups, edit-a-thons, seminars, etc.)
- Marketing (ads, flyers), materials and some design work.
- Ongoing remote assistance for local volunteer organizers.
- Access to an international network of LocalWiki organizers to share ideas and learn from others' experience.