Applicant name: Philip Neustrom

Project name: LocalWiki

1. Questions:

Describe the world as it is. (A description of the status quo and context in which you will be working)

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. The end result is that our communities suffer from a collective amnesia.

Looking at locally-specific information online, you would think the only thing we do in our communities is eat at restaurants. This represents a thin superficial silver of the knowledge that exists in our communities. The vast majority of local knowledge has little if any commercial value but it is priceless to the community over time insofar as it helps us define our history, our culture, and ultimately address our most pressing challenges.

What change do you want to make? (A description of what you want to change about the status quo, in the world, your personal vision for this area)

I want 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 – every facet of life in their community.

If someone is expecting a child, I want them to be able to find all their local parenting groups. If an artist is commissioned for a mural, I want them to be able to learn and find all their local public art. If there is suspected police brutality, I want people to be able to learn the history of their police department. If someone is going hungry, I want them to be able to learn how to enroll in food assistance. If someone is moving to a new area of town, I want them to be able to learn about their new neighborhood – its history, schools, parks, art – everything.

I don't just want people to be passive consumers of information; I want to reshape the way people interact with their community by creating what is ultimately an open, massively collaborative form of community memory itself.

What do you want to explore? (A description of the innovations or questions you would like to explore during the fellowship year)

Collectively, around 400,000 people interact with a LocalWiki project each month. But the reach of LocalWiki is not evenly distributed – some projects are rich with material while others are in less developed stages. We have proven our model can be replicated successfully in several major communities, but our challenge now is to find ways to massively scale the project up with the aim of reaching millions of people throughout the world.

There's a lot of work being done surrounding open data in local communities, but simply opening up data will not meet all local information needs. What's needed are tools, places, and channels for community members to synthesize, contextualize and share the more qualitative aspects of local life. I want to explore new forms and modes of interaction for these tools, and experiment with ways of bridging the worlds of local data and knowledge.

I want to explore ways of making it easier to discover and contribute to LocalWiki projects. In the same way that OpenStreetMap has become a platform for open geographic data, I want to explore ways that LocalWiki can act as a platform for a wealth of local, civic applications and harness the work of thousands of community-minded developers.

I want to pursue relationships and partnerships, particularly with educational institutions, local libraries, and other free culture projects. I want to explore funding models to support effective, sustainable growth.

With few exceptions, the free and open-source software world has focused on global or intrinsically-technical projects. I want to explore how the momentum generated by the open-source and free culture movements can be directed into improving how we interact with our communities.

What are you going to do to get there? (A description of what you actually plan to do during the year)

Technical efforts will be focused on infrastructure to enable LocalWiki to operate at a much larger scale; the development of new types of collaborative tools; mobile software development, especially surrounding mobile editing and contributing processes; and deeper integration with projects such as OpenStreetMap and Wikipedia.

We will develop a centralized, hosted LocalWiki 'hub' to allow anyone, anywhere to discover and contribute knowledge about their community without technical or logistical barriers. This hub will also act as a singular, global platform for developers wishing to build local, civic applications.

We will develop tools and methods for importing local datasets to help populate the project in new regions more quickly. We will develop easy-to-use structured data system for answering questions like "Where are all the non-profits that provide food support that are open on Saturday?" more easily. We will create a member-supported network, endowing community members with an increased sense of ownership and steady cash flow for our organization.

We will focus on building organizational infrastructure to sustain and rapidly expand the project and movement, which up until this point has only had funding for software development. We will experiment with community-centric fundraising methods.

The fellowship will allow me to focus, for the very first time, on serious community outreach and educational efforts. I will travel far and wide to strengthen and vastly expand the network of LocalWiki projects. I will work extensively with other organizations and individuals focused on open source and civic media to create a new kind of free culture movement at the local level.

2. Background information:

Have you started implementation of the idea?

Yes, as seen at http://localwiki.org. The first iteration of the project was focused on developing easy-to-use open-source software designed specifically for the needs of local communities (http://localwiki.org/software/). For information on our 2011-2012 year, see http://localwiki.org/first_year/ (specific figures now outdated). For information on our progress, see http://localwiki.org/blog/

There are now over 70 independent LocalWiki projects in 10 countries and in 7 languages. The LocalWiki software platform has been installed over 1,000 times. LocalWiki projects serve around 400,000 unique visitors per month and 28.8 million page views a year.

How have you funded your initiative in the past?

We've funded the project through community-based fundraising, including a Kickstarter project that had $26k pledged by over 420 backers. In 2010, we received a $350,000 Knight Foundation "News Challenge" grant to support the initial development of the LocalWiki software platform.

We have recently obtained approval for a new $200,000 grant from the Knight Foundation to support the initial development of a centralized LocalWiki "hub" to allow people to collaborate, share and learn without the technical or logistical challenges of creating an independent LocalWiki instance.

Who are your current or potential key partners?

- **Existing LocalWiki projects**: Our existing network of LocalWiki projects and interested individuals, going back many years (since 2004), and reaching hundreds of thousands of individuals.

- **Code for America** (http://codeforamerica.org): We have a close partnership with Code for America and have been closely collaborating with them on their *Brigade* initiative. We've also been working with them in some of their fellowship cities, many of which have LocalWiki projects.

- **CityCamps & Civic Hackathons:** LocalWiki is increasingly being used during civic hackathons, both as a tool to hack on and a way for non-developers to contribute to a local, free culture project.

- **Public libraries**: We have enthusiastic interest from a number public libraries, and some are already spearheading LocalWiki projects for their communities (Ann Arbor, MI; Canton, MI; Tulsa, OK)

- **Hypothesis Project** (http://hypothe.is): We've started working with the Hypothesis team to integrate their annotation system into the LocalWiki platform. We're interested in ways it can improve discussions about content beyond the Wikipedia "Talk page" model.

- **Wikimedia Foundation:** We've worked with the Wikimedia Foundation on planning around certain shared technical and community problems.

- **OpenPlans** (http://openplans.org): We have worked with OpenPlans on shared technical infrastructure, most notably the OpenBlock team (http://openblockproject.org).

- **OpenStreetMap & Open Source Geospatial Foundation**: A number of OpenStreetMappers and members of the OSGeo community are involved with the LocalWiki project. For instance, we want to create a set of standardized annotations for OpenStreetMap to facilitate pushing/pulling data between our projects.

- **The Open Knowledge Foundation:** There are opportunities for collaboration around their *CKAN* project, as a number of local communities are setting up open data hubs using CKAN and would like to explore integration with their LocalWiki projects. There are also possible technical collaborations around versioning structured data and data protocols.

- **Mozilla Foundation**: The maintainer of the Mozilla Developer Network site has recently joined the LocalWiki

core developer team. We use similar tech stacks and are interested in deeper collaboration.

- **Free culture enthusiasts, data geeks, and API/platform consumers:** We want to find ways to make LocalWiki more of a unified platform for pushing and pulling of freely-licensed data, and through that amplify the free culture movement in the same way Wikipedia and OpenStreetMap have.

- **Social service organizations**: There is interest in using LocalWiki as a platform for compiling and querying social service directory information, which is often hidden away in antiquated, disconnected databases. We've been working with social service organizations in Richmond, CA; Washington, DC; and Oakland, CA.

Do you intend to implement the idea as a for-profit or not-for-profit initiative in the future?

As a non-profit initiative. We are a US-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Where will you be based during a potential fellowship?

San Francisco, California, USA, with travel to communities with promising LocalWiki initiatives.

Do you have an online presence? Please provide links.

- **Personal site**: http://mathburritos.org (Currently re-building the site)
- **Twitter**: http://twitter.com/philipn
- **GitHub**: http://github.com/philipn
- **User pages on LocalWiki projects**: e.g. http://daviswiki.org/Users/PhilipNeustrom, https://scruzwiki.org/Users/PhilipNeustrom

Does the idea/project have an online presence? Please provide links.

- **Main site**: http://localwiki.org
- **Blog**: http://localwiki.org/blog/
- **Twitter**: http://twitter.com/localwiki
- **GitHub**: http://github.com/localwiki/localwiki
- **Community sites**: https://guide.localwiki.org, https://dev.localwiki.org, organizers list https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/localwiki-organizers

How did you hear about the Shuttleworth Foundation Fellowship Programme?

I had been following the work of Rufus Pollock and the Open Knowledge Foundation for some time. Over the past several months a number of friends encouraged me to apply and forwarded me the fellowship site and a blog post by Philipp Schmidt.

3. Demographic Data:

- **Gender:** Male
- **Age**: 29 years old
- **Nationalities**: US Citizen, Swedish and German (white).