

## **iWatch in the News** [1]

## **New grants fund 50-state corruption risk index** [2]

The Center for Public Integrity, Public Radio International and Global Integrity have received \$1.5 million in grants to fund an ambitious risk analysis of corruption in all 50 state governments.

Omidyar Network will supply up to \$1 million for the 18-month effort and the Rita Allen Foundation has agreed to provide \$500,000 in matching funds. The State Accountability Project will hire political reporters part-time in every state capital and rank the 50 states for susceptibility to corruption.

The journalists will assess the existence and effectiveness of anti-corruption and government transparency measures at the state level, including political financing, civil service management and state budget processes. The project team will also create online data, reporting and technology tools to empower citizens to demand greater accountability and reform.

“Some of the most hidden forms of political corruption in this country increasingly occur in state governments,” said William E. Buzenberg, executive director of the Center for Public Integrity. “The State Accountability Project will rank each state for risk and specifically show where the dangers lie. Then citizens can get involved and insist on improvements from their elected officials.”

Public Radio International will work with its 880 partner radio stations to inspire people through crowdsourcing and social media to take part in the project and spread the results. “If we hope to stop corruption, people need to be invested and involved,” said Michael Skoler, vice president of interactive media for PRI. “We live in a new media world where people, not simply reporters, can and must be watchdogs for honest government.”

Global Integrity will leverage its success in promoting accountability and transparency in 100 countries to ensure that states put the analysis to practical use. “There are a number of valuable lessons from other countries that can be brought to bear in the US context when it comes to effective anti-corruption controls in the states,” said Global Integrity’s Managing Director Nathaniel Heller. “We’re optimistic that with the right information at their fingertips, both the public and lawmakers can design effective reforms.”

“The Project will bring a much needed focus on our nation’s statehouses,” said Stacy Donohue, director of investments at Omidyar Network. “In addition to investigative reporting, it will utilize technology to enable citizen engagement on issues of importance to them. Omidyar Network believes when citizens have visibility into government actions they are more likely to participate in the political process, ensure public funds are used wisely and hold government officials to account.”

Elizabeth Christopherson, president and chief executive officer of the Rita Allen Foundation, said: “The patriot Thomas Paine noted that dictatorial government only requires ignorance for its support and warned democracy is at risk when the citizenry is not engaged, informed and monitoring the conduct of leaders. As our nation’s founders rightly concluded, it is government with something to hide that we must fear the most. The State Accountability Project has the potential to transform the good-government dialogue and spur more ethical and open processes in the various states, and to serve as a model on the national level. The Rita Allen Foundation is delighted and excited to be part of this endeavor.”

## **About Public Radio International®**

Celebrated as a driver of innovation in public media, Public Radio International<sup>[3]</sup> (PRI) was founded in 1983 to diversify and expand the content available on public platforms, enabling U.S. listeners to “hear a different voice” and to connect with one another and the larger world. PRI shows include PRI’s The World, Studio 360, This American Life, Here and Now, The Tavis Smiley Show and others that bring new voices, global journalism and cultural perspectives to the American public. PRI content is available on pri.org and via podcasts, and is broadcast on 880 public radio stations. More than 13 million people access PRI content each week through these sources.

## **About Global Integrity**

Global Integrity<sup>[4]</sup> generates, synthesizes, and disseminates credible, comprehensive and timely information on governance and corruption trends around the world. As an independent information provider employing on-the-ground expertise, it produces original reporting and quantitative analysis in the global public interest regarding accountable and democratic governance. The information is meant to serve simultaneously as a roadmap for engaged citizens, a reform checklist for policymakers, and a guide to the business climate for investors.

## **About Omidyar Network**

Omidyar Network is a philanthropic investment firm dedicated to harnessing the power of markets to create opportunity for people to improve their lives. Established in 2004 by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar and his wife Pam, the organization invests in and helps scale innovative organizations to catalyze economic and social change. To date, Omidyar Network has committed more than \$383 million to for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations that foster economic advancement and encourage individual participation across multiple investment areas, including microfinance, entrepreneurship, property rights, consumer Internet, mobile technology and government transparency. To learn more about Omidyar Network, please visit [www.omidyar.com](http://www.omidyar.com)<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **About the Rita Allen Foundation**

The overall mission of the Rita Allen Foundation is to invest in transformative ideas in their earliest stages to leverage their growth and promote breakthrough solutions to significant problems. Areas of active interest include investing in young leaders in the sciences and social innovation, promoting civic literacy, and building stronger communities. Based in Princeton, New Jersey, the Rita Allen Foundation was established in 1953. For many years the Foundation has sponsored a Scholars Program that has supported more than one hundred scientists and

researchers over the last thirty years, many of whom have made important advances in medical research. More information is available at: [www.ritaallen.org](http://www.ritaallen.org) [6].

**Kicker:**

Funding states project

New grants support 50-state corruption index from Center, partners

**Source URL:** <http://www.iwatchnews.org/2011/02/17/4200/new-grants-fund-50-state-corruption-risk-index>