

Women journalists receive entrepreneurship grants

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) has announced the winners of the inaugural Women Entrepreneurs in the Global Digital News Frontier grants. Each grantee will receive US\$20,000 to launch innovative new media enterprises.

The winning start-up projects include a website that brings transparency to the health care marketplace, a local journalism initiative that serves "news deserts" in the Catskills region of New York and a news service that takes a game-changing approach to international coverage.

Ford Foundation funds program

The Women Entrepreneurs in the Global Digital News Frontier grant program, offered for the first time this year, is funded by the Ford Foundation. The award winners were selected from more than 100 proposals from a diverse array of entrepreneurial women journalists. Key grant criteria included innovation in delivering the news and a clear business plan for achieving sustainability beyond the year-long grant program.

"Promoting women journalists' professional advancement - in both traditional and new media - is a central tenet of the IWMF's mission," Liza Gross, executive director of the IWMF said, adding that the foundation is looking forward to work with these pioneering women entrepreneurs as they launch their exciting digital media startups.

"These grants, combined with training the IWMF will be offering, will help women to succeed in new media entrepreneurship, an arena where their numbers have been sorely lacking," IWMF Advisory Committee chairman Merrill Brown said.

"Each of the winners offers an innovative way to deliver the news, and they are truly at the forefront of the digital media frontier."

The winners:

Clearhealthcosts.com, the brainchild of former *New York Times* veteran editor and reporter Jeanne Pinder, will feature a curated collection of health care pricing information in a consumer-friendly, community-oriented, interactive website that combines reporting, user-generated content and databases to illuminate this largely opaque market.

Latitude, conceived by longtime BBC editor and producer and recent Nieman Fellow Maria Balinska, will approach international journalism by exploring connections between Americans and the rest of the world and promoting a deeper

understanding of how the US fits into the global news narrative.

NewsShed, a spinoff enterprise of Julia Reischel and Lissa Harris's regional news aggregator *The Watershed Post*, will create self-supporting news websites in small rural towns in the Catskills to build a sustainable model of online-only local journalism in these underserved and economically depressed communities.

Pro-bono coaching

In addition to grant funding, Pinder, Balinska, Reischel and Harris will receive pro-bono coaching from respected new media leaders on the IWMF's Advisory Committee to ensure that they have the right match of support and skills to thrive as digital news entrepreneurs.

The winners will also be featured on a panel moderated by *The Washington Post's* Eugene Robinson during the IWMF's International Conference of Women Media Leaders at George Washington University on 23 March 2011.

Founded in 1990, The International Women's Media Foundation is a vibrant global network dedicated to strengthening the role of women in news media worldwide as a means to further press freedom.

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- Carole Kimutai is a writer and editor based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently an MA student in New Media at the University of Leicester, UK. Follow her on Twitter at @CaroleKimutai.
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