MEDIA RELEASE

Community Foundation Boulder County joins national initiative to help close local news and information gaps
Knight Foundation-led effort leads funders through a human-centered design process

Boulder (Aug. 29, 2017) – The Community Foundation Boulder County is among four community foundations that will join a new design lab to help them find ways to ensure their communities are informed about issues important to them, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced this week.

The Knight Community Information Lab will take the foundations through an 18-month human-centered design process that will help them get to the heart of the information gaps in their community, prototype ideas and develop long-term solutions with the input of local residents.

“Instead of supporting a specific news and information project, Knight is helping foundations like ours take a few steps back to discover and design an approach that’s right for our community – for Boulder County,” says Gretchen Minekime, Vice President of Communications for the Community Foundation. “As a participant in the Knight Community Information Lab, we plan to explore the information needs of people who are left out of the county’s economic success, particularly Latinos and other populations under-represented by our current power structure. This initiative directly aligns with our value to advance equity and access for everyone in Boulder County.”

Starting this fall, the four foundations – also including the Baltimore Community Foundation, The Cleveland Foundation, and the Lancaster County Community Foundation – will attend workshops together that follow the four steps of human-centered design: inspiration, which involves in-depth community research and testing assumptions; interpreting that research; working with the audience to design solutions; and testing the idea with peers. Knight funding of $65K will cover travel and staff time to devote to the lab, in addition to prototyping ideas.

“Since the very beginning of the digital disruption, communities have been inundated with news and information. But these days, it’s actually harder to find the accurate, contextual, local news and information that is essential to everyday democracy,” said Lilly Weinberg, Director of the Knight Foundation’s Community Foundations Program. “Funders have a role to play in finding these gaps and working with residents to discover ways to fill them.”

The lab initiative has its roots in the Knight Community Information Challenge, which launched in 2008 as the disruptions of the digital age began to dramatically affect communities and
newsrooms. The challenge offered matching grants to encourage funders to take a leadership role in meeting local information needs, providing $22M to 88 foundations across the country. The Community Foundation Boulder County won three of these grants, including one for “Ready.Set.Learn,” a public awareness campaign on the importance of investing in early childhood education. The lab builds on that approach, and creates a new way of funding for Knight Foundation that empowers participating foundations to identify the topic areas it expects to explore in the lab.

Knight Foundation recently tested this concept with four other foundations, which went through a similar process, with great success. With insights from the lab, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has been able to help small non- and for-profit media outlets in New Jersey find new revenue models, for example. Meanwhile, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation is helping to form a regional media collaborative to investigate the lack of affordable housing in the area. Each of these foundations are continuing their work in meeting local information needs.

**Community Foundation Boulder County**
For 26 years, the Community Foundation Boulder County has been a community catalyst, responding to immediate needs and anticipating future challenges. Through informed decision-making, we inspire ideas, ignite action and mobilize resources to improve the quality of life for all. Advancing inclusivity and providing leadership and on key issues, the foundation collaborates with community-minded individuals and organizations that want to make a difference, accomplishing more together than we do alone. Since its founding in 1991, the foundation has granted more than $75M to nonprofits focused on health and human services, basic needs, children and youth, education, civic engagement, arts and culture, and animals and the environment. [commfound.org/news-media](http://commfound.org/news-media)

**John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**
Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy. [knightfoundation.org](http://knightfoundation.org)

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