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Ford Foundation expands Creative Commons licensing for all grant-funded projects

3 FEBRUARY 2015

(New York) – The Ford Foundation announced today that it is adopting an open licensing policy for all grant-funded projects and research to promote greater transparency and accessibility of materials. Effective February 1, grantees and consultants will be required to make foundation-funded materials subject to a Creative Commons license allowing others, free of charge and without requesting permission, the ability to copy, redistribute, and adapt existing materials, provided they give appropriate credit to the original author.

The Ford Foundation has long supported transparency—including open licensing, which is an alternative to the traditional “all rights reserved” copyright and encourages sharing intellectual property in a digital global commons. By moving to broadly disseminate a large amount of educational and research materials resulting from its funding, the foundation hopes to make its work and the work of its grantees more accessible and, ultimately, increase its impact.

“Our organization is committed to being as transparent and open as possible, and this philosophy extends to the work we fund and the valuable materials we and our grantees produce,” said Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation. “This policy change will help grantees and the public more easily connect with us and build upon our work, ensure our grant dollars go further and are more impactful, and—most importantly—increase our ability to advance social justice worldwide.”

The Ford Foundation plans to use the most recent Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) (CC BY 4.0), the most open license offered by Creative Commons, a nonprofit organization and Ford Foundation grantee dedicated to facilitating the sharing and use of materials through simple, standardized open licenses. For more information about the organization, visit their website (<http://creativecommons.org/about>).

Beginning February 1, project grants from the foundation will include a requirement that the grantee widely disseminate all copyrightable products funded by the grant—including white papers, research reports, and websites—and license them under the CC BY 4.0 license. In certain situations, such as when the expected product contains sensitive or confidential material, the Creative

Commons license will not be a requirement. Additionally, the change will apply to all materials not subject to third-party ownership on the Ford Foundation's website.

"We're incredibly pleased to see the Ford Foundation adopting a Creative Commons licensing policy for a wide range of grant-funded works, promoting openness and the re-use of content produced through its philanthropic grant making," said Ryan Merkle, CEO of Creative Commons. "The Ford Foundation joins a growing movement of foundations and governments adopting policies that increase access to and re-use of digital education materials, research articles, and data using Creative Commons."

The Ford Foundation is proud to join other organizations, including Open Society Foundations, the Packard Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which use some form of Creative Commons license. Working together with these partners and others, the foundation is reaffirming its commitment to make the philanthropic sector a leader in information sharing and knowledge transfer.

Read the announcement from Timothy Vollmer of Creative Commons here (<https://creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/44865>).

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The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

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