

## **The Headwaters Fund of Humboldt County Summary of Final Report**

**Organization Name:** Humboldt State University Office for Economic & Community Development /HSU Sponsored Programs Foundation

**Project Title:** Assistance to the Humboldt County Film Commission and an Analysis of Conditions Needed to Support Growth of the Film and Digital Media Industry in Humboldt County

**Amount of Grant Award:** \$20,000

**Date of Final Report:** 9/1/08

### **1. What were the project goals and were they achieved?**

The project's over-arching goal was to strengthen both the Humboldt County Film Commission and the young film and digital media industry of Humboldt County, preparing them both for growth. This goal has been achieved and the project outcomes exceeded initial expectations. The Humboldt Film & Digital Media Commission has been reorganized as a new nonprofit organization with a board of directors, staff, and volunteers dedicated to its mission of attracting film productions and serving as the hub for the growing number of small film and digital media businesses in Humboldt County.

### **2. What were the activities undertaken and accomplishments through the completion of this grant?**

The Film Commission has sought to increase the number of television commercials filmed in Humboldt County. During the ten year period, 1986-1996, 42 commercials were produced in Humboldt County. From 1997 to 2006, 54 commercials were produced.

Consistent with the entire film industry, local digital media has also become significant to the work of the HF&DMC. The local integration of digital media with film production was reflected in the change of name to Humboldt Film & Digital Media Commission (**HF&DMC**) in April 2007.

The HSU OECD initiated meetings among the Humboldt County Workforce Investment Board, Klamath-Trinity School District, Northern California Indian Development Council, Hoopa Tribe, Humboldt State University, Bay Area Video Coalition, and several other collaborating organizations, agencies, and individuals to raise the funds necessary for the computer equipment, software, and instructors to provide a new 2-week training course, "Digital Pathways in Native American Communities" to fifteen youths. With HSU college credit and follow-up internship opportunities, this experience was so successful that plans are being made to expand this Digital Pathways model course to youths throughout Humboldt County.

A matching grant of \$250,000 to HSU in October 2007, was one of the first investments by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), to a rural region in California. In partnership with a consortium of regional fund providers including the Humboldt Area Foundation, the Headwaters Fund, the Mel and Grace McLean Foundation, the Redwood Region Economic Development Commission, the counties themselves and other supporters of the Redwood Coast Initiative, the CETF is looking to this Redwood Coast partnership as a prototype project to attract high-speed broadband service to every Redwood Coast community in the four-county region.

The 2007 Wild Rivers 101 Film Festival was the first countywide international film festival, with a focus of bringing diverse cinema and digital media to Humboldt County. Approximately \$25,000 was received in sponsorships and in-kind donations. The week-long event featured 14 visiting filmmakers and digital media professionals from LA and San Francisco. HSU OECD assisted in the development of “Canopy: the Digital Bridge,” one day dedicated to digital media. Film Festival founder and director, Mary Cruse, reported that approximately 400 to 500 people attended.

With support from The Headwaters Fund, this project brought two film and digital media industry speakers to the area to meet with local business leaders, economic development professionals, and HSU faculty and students. Both speakers, Jim Fitzpatrick, former Counsel to the Motion Picture Association of America and current Deputy Director of the California Film Commission, and Joaquin Alvarado, film maker and Director of the San Francisco State University Institute for Next Generation Internet, advised North Coast businesses, agencies, and educational institutions that this region must incorporate the development of digital media to be able to compete in the rapidly changing film industry. HSU’s OECD worked with the Film Commission over the past 24 months to develop itself as a hub serving both film and digital media-related businesses.

In August 22, 2007, the HF&DMC parent organization, the Humboldt County Convention & Visitors Bureau, approved the request for the HF&DMC to form its own autonomous organization. The OECD director has served with seven other individuals in a Transition Committee to prepare for this separation. The final Memorandum of Agreement and funding commitments from local governments is expected to be complete by early December 2007.

#### **A. Upgrade the Film Commission website for location scouts, producers and location managers.**

During August 2005 - March 2006 we upgraded the Film online services for prospective film productions, conducted survey research to populate three on-line directories:

- (1) an on-line directory of the local crew base (ie. a wide range of technicians, artists, actors, location scouts, location managers, whose individual or business specializations relate to filming and/or digital media);
- (2) an on-line locations library of photographs and descriptions needed for filming; and
- (3) an on-line production guide that will list a variety of services, including equipment & vehicle rentals, native plans for sets, sound/lighting equipment, and catering trucks equipment and facilities available locally for film production.

The formal launch of this website took place at “LOCATIONS”, a major industry trade show in Los Angeles. A new promotional Film Commission DVD showcasing commercials that were shot on location on the North Coast will be featured on the new website:

<http://learn2.humboldt.edu/~film/>

#### **B. Recruit and Organize an HSU Labor Pool**

This project’s work --combined with the hiring of two new faculty – David Scheerer, film producer and professor in HSU’s Theatre, Film & Dance Department, and Wayne Knight, HSU Art professor and director of the digital media lab, have paved the way for regular student placements and faculty and staff involvement with the Film & Digital Media Commission.

Barbara Bryant, the Film Commissioner, made a formal presentation to the HSU Business Partners Steering Committee on February 7, 2006 to introduce the opportunities for collaboration between the university and the Film Commission. We scheduled speaking engagements for her with all of the relevant academic departments and technical staff at HSU.

### **3. What are the lasting benefits of the project?**

This project's work with the North Coast's small businesses in film and digital media production ignited a spark that has produced much more than originally expected. The Headwaters Fund grant attracted additional support from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce Economic Development Administration for the HSU OECD to assist the film commissioner in developing the Commission to serve as a hub for a fledgling film and digital media cluster in the region. HSU's Office for Economic & Community Development has been instrumental in mobilizing the expertise and resources of organizations, businesses, and local governments to create a new, autonomous Humboldt Film & Digital Media Commission. The new organization serves as a regional hub for this industry.

### **4. How will you continue work started by this project?**

#### **Findings and Recommendations**

The next steps for the continued development of this industry in California's North Coast region are articulated in the work plan for the new Humboldt Film & Digital Media Commission:

- Seek financing and other forms of support to improve film and digital production facilities and equipment in the region.
- Reach out to involve College of the Redwoods' digital media faculty and resources.
- Develop professional development and training, social and business opportunities to mobilize the small businesses related to film and digital media.
- The Humboldt Film & Digital Media Commission and HSU's Office for Economic & Community Development will continue to work with the County Workforce Investment Board to develop courses and programs that involve youth in digital media and film production
- The HSU OECD will accompany the Film Commissioner to meetings with local city councils and county boards of supervisors to continue to inform them of the developments within this fledgling industry and its impact on the economy.
- Continue communications with the California Film Commission and Film Liaisons In California and around the country to cultivate those vital relationships between our rural region and national and international film and digital media industry.