2013 Report

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|  | **Using the original proposal’s evaluation framework as a guide, what did the project accomplish, measured against the original objectives?** |

In 2013, the Media Consortium aimed to become a connector between media organizations and between media and media advocacy organizations. In our grant request, we laid out a plan for achieving these connections that relied on developing our media policy project which had proved a good way to connect policy organizations to media; developing multimedia and multioutlet collaborations; and connecting to community journalists. We also aimed to pursue our media impact measuring project.

We largely succeeded in all of these areas except working with community journalists. However, our successes came in different ways than we had previous imagined.

Media Policy

With additional support from the Media Democracy Fund, we sent 19 reporters to NCMR, where reporters connected with media policy advocactes. In addition, we held 2 in-person events and 7 phone briefings in 2013, building a tight network between media policy advocates and reporters.

Collaborations

We had expected to get an additional grant to support a fracking collaboration. That did not happen. However, the fracking group decided instead to work together to report on pesticide use in Kauai. This project, which received a grant in October of 2013, came to fruition in 2014.

The significant collaboration that happened in 2013 ended up being around Reproductive Justice—5 TMC outlets plus 5 AAN outlets worked together to launch Where is My Plan B? a multimedia collaboration that educated the public about the new over the counter availability of the plan b pill to terminate pregnancy.

Measuring Impact

TMC staff worked with researchers to set up the metrics experiment that will begin in 2014.

In addition to these successes, TMC Director Jo Ellen Green Kaiser began a strategic planning process to investigate an alliance with AAN.

**Did the project encounter any unanticipated problems, or even anticipated resistance? If so, please describe the problems and the adjustments required in the original strategy.**

Yes.

For one, we had expected that the success of the Media Policy Project would lead to similar “beat-based” projects such as a Labor Reporting Project, Environmental Reporting Project, and Health Care Reporting Project. TMC Director tried throughout the year to find funders and partners interested in launching these projects. However, philanthropists did not have an appetite for projects in these areas.

We also expected that fracking would continue to be a significant area of interest for philanthropy and that we would be able to bring in additional funds for a larger project around fracking. The timing was wrong, however. By 2013, fracking was taken up by commercial news outlets like the New York Times, and funders of independent outlets had moved on to other concerns. We reacted by redirecting our attention to pesticides.

Our biggest adjustment was around the Community Journalism Training Institute. The idea was to work with advocacy organizations to train their members to become community journalists. We had seen this as a solution to the Media Consortium’s need for revenue as well as a great way to connect with advocacy organizations and to build a network of community journalists.

As a preliminary step to launching the project, we worked with a Catchafire volunteer, Justin Hendrix, to create a business plan for this venture. To our chagrin, we found that the business plan simply didn’t pencil out. We would have needed to bring in $1M in revenues to ensure the project ran in the black, and the organizations of the right size to pay for services at that scale were not interested in hiring anyone outside their organization to work with their members.

Though we were very disappointed in the outcome of this plan, the planning process was educational for TMC staff and leadership. It has led us to go back to strategic planning, specifically looking to strengthen our network via a closer partnership with another media organization.

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| equired | **Would you consider this grant a success or not? Provide a brief explanation of this assessment. (i.e., Did it achieve the goals/objectives laid out in the proposal?)** |

We considered this grant a success. The fact that the grant was unrestricted allowed us to roll with the punches and change direction in a nimble way. We were able to achieve our primary objectives, which were to strengthen multi-outlet collaborations and relations between news outlets and advocacy organizations.

We also continued all of our regular programming, including a very successful meeting in Baltimore. Our organization grew by six members, and our leadership has embarked on a new round of strategic planning. We feel much stronger going into 2014.