**Media Consortium: Executive Summary**

**January 25, 2016[[1]](#footnote-1)•**

**Goals and Objectives**

The Media Consortium proposed two different goals for its MDF funding in 2015-2016. The first goal was to build the capacity of media policy journalism by holding media policy workshops in conjunction with IRE and ONA. The second goal was to create a “backbone” for independent news outlets to create collective impact. Since these goals were very different, this report addresses each separately.

**I. Media Policy Training**

Results to Date: Both ONA and IRE expressed significant interest in creating a workshop at their conferences to train reporters in media policy and EEJF asked for a full proposal in June 2015. Our plan was to fund the workshop with EEJF money, and use MDF money to cover travel grants.

Challenges: EEJF denied our proposal in August 2015. Unfortunately, the program officer refused to provide an explanation for the denial. As a result, we had to cancel the planned workshops at ONA and NICAR.

In addition, Media Consortium staff have had a capacity challenge providing monthly webinars, and have not fulfilled that objective to date. We plan to jumpstart these webinars after our annual meeting, to prepare journalists for our IRE workshop. We have been actively pursuing grants for other programming which we believe will increase our staff capacity to 2 FTE, which should solve this challenge.

Lessons Learned: Outside of MDF, it is almost impossible to get funding for anything related to media policy. In the future, instead of basing our proposals on finding matching funds, we will work with what MDF can offer us.

Project Workplan with Recommended Adjustments: The MDF grant originally allocated $15,000 for travel grants to the ONA, NICAR and IRE conferences. Instead, we propose spending $15,000 to make a significant half-day media policy conference happen at IRE, fully funded by MDF.

As per our new budget, we propose allocating $5000 to Media Consortium staff to plan the event, $5000 to bring in speakers, and $5000 to fund travel for reporters who would not otherwise be able to attend.

This new plan will change our benchmarks:

* Train 30+ journalists from independent, public and corporate media
* At least 10 of these journalist will be from independent outlets
* Provide webinars starting in March 2016 to prepare for the June workshop.

**II. Strategic Planning for the Independent Media Sector.**

Results to Date: We are pleased that we have exceeded expectations on our second goal and already have completed and exceeded our benchmarks.

* On May 1, Executive Director Jo Ellen Kaiser released a report (attached here) providing a roadmap for building one independent news sector.
* From May 14-17, 2015 Kaiser attended the Pocantico convening on independent journalism. To connect with leaders of independent media Kaiser also attended the IRE, NNPA and AMC conferences in June; the AAN conference in July; the AEJMC conference in August; gave a keynote based on her paper at ACM on August 14; and attended ONA and Experience Engagement in September. The aim of this travel was for Kaiser to better understand the independent media landscape.
* As a result of this travel, Kaiser convened the leaders of 9 independent news associations to begin quarterly conversations. The first meeting was held December 15, 2015; the second will be held February 20, 2016.

A key aspect of this strategic planning work was to understand if TMC and AAN could come to agreement on a merger. On June 8, 2015, TMC-AAN held a high-level meeting to discuss a possible merger, followed by Kaiser’s attendance July 15 at an AAN board meeting.

Challenges Encountered**:** A deep engagement with AAN’s leadership proved that AAN was not ready to merge with the Media Consortium. While we ended talks on merger, we all agreed to continue talks on strategic partnerships. As a result, we entered into a partnership offering a discount on Chartbeat; an agreement to provide member rates to each other at our conferences; and a commitment to doing joint editorial work.

Lessons Learned**:** The sector is designed so that organizations have more reasons to remain independent than to merge. Our focus will now be on building strategic partnerships with multiple associations, while keeping the possiblity of a merger as a long-term goal.

Project Workplan with Recommended Adjustments**:** No adjustments.

**III. New Work**

We are pleased to announce that we have begun an initiative on race equity in independent media. That work begins with our 2016 conference, to which we are inviting members of AAN, INN, AMC and NFCB as well as our members. We plan to build on this work in 2016-2017 with the aim of ensuring that independent media creates content for, by and about people of color.

1. • Apologies for our delay. We did not realize an interim report was due. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)