**From:** [joellen.tmc@gmail.com](mailto:joellen.tmc@gmail.com" \t "_blank) [mailto:[joellen.tmc@gmail.com](mailto:joellen.tmc@gmail.com" \t "_blank)] **On Behalf Of** Jo Ellen Kaiser  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 30, 2014 9:56 PM  
**To:** John Schwartz; Lori McGlinchey; Helen Brunner; Kate Lesniak; June Wilson  
**Cc:** Allison Barlow; Lenore Hanisch; Dominic Lowell; [vince@mediafunders.org](mailto:vince@mediafunders.org" \t "_blank)  
**Subject:** Media Consortium strategic planning focus group Jan 31 at noon PT/ 3 ET

Present: Zarina, June, John, Vince, Helen, Allison

**What motivated you to support the Media Consortium initially?**

In 2004, we were talking about the lack of cooperation around the elections; we felt it would be interesting and worthwhile to discuss what could come out of that. MDF funded that meeting; RBF, Vince@Surdna, took the ball and ran with it. More recently, we are interested in coordinated coverage with timing can increase impact especially in the past year around media policy and the plan B event.

We deeply care about media impact and media reform. The coming together around the repro and media work, the coordinated effort to look at the issue, was right on, extremely strategic, and helped to move our interest.

In the real world, I don’t think we could do an experiment around impact without the Media Consortium’s help.

As a grantmaker, I recall the opportunity and urgency of convening a group of strong individual and independent voices, particularly in the aftermath of the elections. The mainstream media was not lifting up reporting out of these outlets. By convening those voices and getting them to work together, they have had an impact, especially around the coverage of Occupy, issues of war/peace, other areas—the level of collaboration and coordination has helped to raise up these issues. And now hats off to the effort to gauge that impact. Whether it can muster support to keep on keeping on, I don’t know.

Comprehensive issue frame—capacity to weave together not only content and outlets but also to provide infrastructure. It is really a laboratory, a 21st century community, the kind that people get excited about—TMC has advanced the practice of sharing and creating conditions in which innovation and learning can thrive and prosper. As we are looking and thinking about ways to tell the TMC story, the things that drive interest are what TMC is about. Drawing on resources of TMC community, of telling that kind of story would be helpful. We’ve moved from ad hoc to true laboratory, incubator and community, and to growing the field in a way that will make independent media world sustainable. But it is a challenge to communicate the value-add.

**Question: What is the lens through which you see us and through which you want to see us?on question is around unique values: the role of tmc plays? how do you name that?  
progressive, independent, advocacy, solutions?**

Independent is the word I use, and I only use progressive depending on the audience. But in the second sentence, once you mention the outlets, you end up with progressive. Solutions, Advocacy—might obscure the fact that the outlets aren’t journalistic.

All the journalists will be adamant about their independence first, even acknowledging that they have a point of view. It has become more mainstream to acknowledge the point of view, and that disclosure is necessary. In the funding world, funders who support media want to engage media that has a tendency to be more objective than the funders are themselves. Funders tend not to want to align their activities with the outlets that are most naturally coherent with their funding worldview—I don’t understand that. Year over year there is a significant increase in funding. Majority of the funding is to media platforms/ activities of nonprofits. There is something in there that is worth exploring.

Back in 2008, when the DA put out funding rounds, there was an interest in media. Progressive media sector runs at $100 million a year, which is substantial—the sector is bigger than I realized. As a pure trade association, the sector is big enough to have a trade association. But TMC is funded 85/15, not significantly funded by members. It should label itself as members see if

**jo ellen: explains that she cannot raise dues or members just won't join.**  
  
questions:  
  
does that mean that business related opportunities and materials are? how is that assessed in terms of value? it sounds like content helps with the mission agenda, but from the business perspective, is it less valuable?  
  
jo ellen: explains that most members have budgets of $200,000 - $500,000. strapped for cash. need business advice. but just simply running incredibly tight budgets.   
  
larger orgs do get marketing and networking. but still hard to justify paying a higher rate. vast majority of groups don't belong to any other organizations than the media consortium.   
  
response:  
  
so much value in the network for funders and donors. finds it shocking that there isn't more support going to TMC along the lines of plan b or campaign cash stuff where for funders, it's one stop shopping--fantastic. also walk away with the feeling that you've had more impact and generated more stories/buzz about whatever it is you're trying to do. wonders if they can shore up more funding to this end--foundations talk all the time about need for progressive infrastructure--and surprised that these organizations don't fund TMC--why is there a disconnect there? what are the barriers?

**TMC doesn't have a big public profile because jo ellen can't make big public statements because she is a FNP project and would have to run anything she says past the board. not a 501c3. if they were they might be able to advocate within the media space in a stronger way. would that draw more attention from funders? doesn't know what this looks like, just knows she can't do it.**

I don’t subscribe to the “it’s time to have your own 501c3 theory—I like having a back office.” I don’t think there is anything wrong with being a project. However, I personally wouldn’t be more atracted to funding if you had stronger policy positions. What I see the value of is how an issue gets elevated through the coordinated coverage, rather than TMC itself.

We asked repro funders to come. Everyone there had heard of FNP, but they hadn’t heard of Media Consortium. There was cache of being related to FNP. Everyone who came appreciated the work. The challenge was that they were funding organizations directly. The question is, where does the advocacy overlap with the media work. Develop relationships; understand how media and advocacy could be aligned.

AT MIF, most of our programs cover a broad range of social impact topics, almost agnostically. If we focus in on particular programs, to be more explicit to connect to members or funders, that could help reach out to funders. Organize discussions around climate, around education, around repro—doing a series of briefings on ways we can support programmatic strengths.

Different case from another sunset. There is so much value in this network for funders, and I find it shocking that there isn’t more support going to the Consortium for that. You walk away with the feeling you’ve had more impact, stories, buzz than not. I wonder if we can’t work to help shore up that aspect of marketing to foundations.

**FLOAT the AAN merger**

Interesting idea; the devil is in the details. Do you maintain an independent brand or a comingled brand? It’s intriguing. Would you lose cache?

Concern: if it has been hard enough to create an identity for the organization now, how much harder would it be if it were merged?

Can you do it in a way that maintains an independent brand?

**Issue-Based Funders:**

Look at most likely affinity group conferences and asking for funders to work us into a panel, or a briefing call in association with one of these groups so we can get into an issue-based culture.

We have media personalities we can bring to the table. Celebrities! Engage the voices of those who benefit to talk about the value-add.