



Background

Since early 2011, with significant support from the Gill Foundation, The American Independent News Network (AINN) has collaborated deeply with the Center for American Progress (CAP) to spotlight homophobic agents of intolerance. Using journalistic drumbeats, online news outlets from each organization strategically created impact together.

For example, when influential FAMiLY LEADER president Bob vander Plaats endorsed the Second Hand Effects campaign and claimed that being gay “is a public health risk,” CAP’s Think Progress and AINN’s Iowa Independent launched a drumbeat of coverage to see if GOP leaders supported vander Plaats position. Reporters questioned presidential candidates that had signed FAMiLY LEADER’s “morality pledge,” and Iowa GOP leaders, about whether vander Plaats spoke for them and the party, highlighting the rift existing on the right. As these leaders backed away from vander Plaats, other media outlets in Iowa and at the national level jumped on the bandwagon, blogging about the AINN and CAP pieces and writing original pieces. Vander Plaats was ultimately neutralized as a major political player in Iowa and on the national scene.

By partnering around coverage, AINN and CAP built off each other’s strengths: AINN’s on-the-ground, local expertise and in-depth investigative capacity; CAP’s ability to quickly blog and amplify stories at the national level. By working together, the outlets were able to take stories further, faster.

A New Opportunity

AINN now has a project that would benefit from an even wider and deeper collaboration.

Since December 2011, as part of the ongoing LGBT equality project supported by the Gill Foundation, AINN’s Andy Birkey has been researching more than 50 religious right, tea party, and Islamophobic institutions. The results of this research will come together in a cutting-edge infographic map and written product that will identify the connections between right-wing individuals and funders (both foundations and corporations). This mapping project will provide a lasting resource for progressive media and advocacy organizations. With the right media push, it also can create a new, expanded echo chamber to amplify information about agents of intolerance. AINN proposes to create that echo chamber by partnering with up to ten other independent news outlets from the Media Consortium. (TMC). TMC is a national network of more than 50 progressive news outlets including AINN, Mother Jones, Ms., The Young Turks, The Thom Hartmann Show, and Free Speech TV. TMC has successfully led collaborative reporting efforts around topics including media policy and *Citizens United*. The *Citizens United* collaboration, for example, introduced the #campaigncash meme, amplifying the connection between mystery money and politics.

In TMC collaborations, outlets with preexisting experience in covering the chosen theme apply to receive nominal grants to report on it over a specific time period (usually two to six weeks), creating an echo chamber reaching upwards of 30 million readers, viewers, and listeners. By creating a similar collaborative reporting effort with TMC around AINN’s upcoming right wing mapping project, we can ensure multiple outcomes: deeper engagement with AINN’s map and content, wider audience reach, and greater publicity of the challenges posed by agents of intolerance.



To ensure the success of this collaboration, AINN proposes hosting a half-day event in New York City focused on the mapping project, tailored to media participants of the TMC project, like-minded advocacy organizations, and interested foundations. The event would include a moderated panel featuring AINN reporter Andy Birkey, as well as structured brainstorming about the project and potential outreach and publicity efforts. The event would be held approximately one week prior to the public release of the map (TBD) and related series of articles on AINN's The American Independent, allowing attendees to have time to fully digest and work with the embargoed map.

Expenses

EXPENSE	COST
Mini-grants for up to 10 news outlets (going towards coverage and/or travel to half-day event). Amounts granted will vary depending upon news medium (tv costs more than radio, which costs more than print to produce).	\$18,000
Mini-grant for The Media Consortium to manage granting process and deliverables, and travel to event for relevant staff.	\$3,500
Mini-grant for The American Independent News Network to manage event, and travel to event for relevant staff.	\$3,000
Food and beverages for event.	\$500
Event space.	in-kind donation
TOTAL	\$25,000