Media Consortium Metrics Project

Status Report: July 2015

On May 30, 2015, the Media Consortium’s Metrics Project contract with the Voqal Fund was amended to make it possible for the Media Consortium to 1) hire Manolia Charlotin to coordinate the project 2) produce a minimum of 20 collaborations by August 30, 2015 and 3) involve a minimum of 25 outlets in these collaborations. Researchers noted that they would prefer 30-40 collaborations.

Since March, Manolia has been in contact with 40 member outlets and 21 of them have participated, with another 3 scheduled to participate in July, which will bring us to 24 outlets by July 30. We fully anticipate that 25 outlets will participate by August 30.

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| AlterNet | 5/27/15 |  |  |  |  |
| Bitch Media | 5/12/15 |  |  |  |  |
| cascadia Times | 5/20/15 |  |  |  |  |
| Defending Dissent | 5/12/15 | 6/16/15 |  |  |  |
| Earth Island | 5/12/15 | 5/20/15 |  |  |  |
| Feministing  FSRN | 5/12/15 |  |  |  |  |
| GenerationProgress  Grist | 6/15/15 |  |  |  |  |
| HawaiiIndependent | 5/20/15 |  |  |  |  |
| In These Times | 5/12/15 | 5/27/15 | 6/15/15 |  |  |
| Making Contact | 4/6/15 | 4/20/15 | 6/16/15 |  |  |
| Ms. Magazine | 4/6/15 | 4/20/15 |  |  |  |
| NAM | 6/16/15 |  |  |  |  |
| people.power | 6/16/15 |  |  |  |  |
| Progressive | 5/12/15 | 5/20/15 | 5/27/15 | 6/15/15 |  |
| PR Watch | 5/20/15 | 5/27/15 |  |  |  |
| PNS | 5/20/15 |  |  |  |  |
| Truthout | 4/20/15 | 5/12/15 | 5/20/15 | 6/16/15 | 6/15/15 |
| RPE | 6/16/15 |  |  |  |  |
| Yes! magazine | 5/12/15 |  |  |  |  |

As expected, it took Manolia approximately six weeks of working with outlets before those initial contacts began producing collaborations. The first collaborative efforts appeared in April, and since then have been increasing steadily (see Appendix for details):

Number of Collaborations/ Month

April 2

May 4

June 5

July 1 + 5 (anticipated)

We have completed 12 collaborations to date and are on track to complete 17 collaborations by the end of July. We will definitely reach 20 collaborations by August 30, 2015.

**Analysis of Efforts to Date**

Though we had built in a cushion for unexpected delays, we frankly had hoped to have worked with 25 outlets and to have produced at least 20 collaborative instances by June 30, 2015.

Manolia actually had set up 10 collaborative instances in June, but then saw 5 of them fall through. She has analyzed these failures and come up with two insights:

* **Will vs. Publishing Instincts:** Most of the editors we’ve been in communication with over the last three months have expressed an enthusiastic desire to participate in the project, and have even confirmed that they’d join a specific collaboration. However, once we get closer to confirmation of a publication date, they sometimes get anxious about sitting on a completed story and decide to run the piece outside of a collaboration. In digital news landscape, the instinct is to publish as soon as a story is completed.
* **Project Comprehension:** Once we’re in contact with editors and explain how the experiment is conducted, we confirm that they understand the protocols of the experiment. However, as we get closer to choosing a publication date, some of them pull out, realizing that they didn’t fully understand some critical components to experiment (e.g. not publishing about chosen topic on the off-week in order to measure impact of the on-week)

We have experimented with using money to incentivize a better response. What we have found is that money is useful in bringing on outlets that would not otherwise participate—we have given small grants to People.Power.Media; Race, Poverty and the Environment; and Feministing to win their participation.

Funding has not, however, been useful in resolving the problem of outlets pulling out of their commitments in order to publish stories outside of the researchers’ schedule. For them, it is an editorial decision, not a financial decision.

Manolia is making the following adjustment to compensate for these problems:

* Spend more time educating participants about the experiment protocols.
* Using at least two outlets per collaboration that have previously participated, so that we know they understand and accept the protocols.

**Decision Point: Closing the Experiment**

Gary has been clear that he, Ariel and Ben would very much like us to reach 40 collaborative instances. They believe they need that many in order to publish an academic paper on the work.

I believe the work to date shows clearly that our collaborations do have an impact. I am impatient to start making the case to the funding world that this collaborative work is valuable. Fall 2015 seems an especially propitious time, as “collaboration” is the current buzzword in the media funding community.

My suggestion is to do both.

1) Continue to employ Manolia at the rate of $1750/month to produce a minimum of 4 collaborations per month through December 31 2015, with the goal of 40 collaborations between March 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015.

2) Reduce the funding available for outlets from $17,750 to $7,750 (of which $2500 has already been spent). Shift the difference ($10,000) into paying Manolia for four extra months in 2015 ($7000) and funding to promote the outcome of the experiment via travel, grant writing, etc. ($3000).

3) Meanwhile, ask Gary to produce a preliminary report and begin aggressively promoting the outcome of the experiment to funders starting in September 2015.

**Collaborations**

**April**: 3 outlets participated in 2 reproductive rights collaborations about abortions. While access to quality abortion clinics is expanding across the states, that would help women who can’t afford the care they need, anti-choice efforts are gaining ground from state legislatures to growing activism against police violence.

Ms. Magazine / Making Contact / Truthout

[In Some States, Access to Abortion Care is Expanding](http://msmagazine.com/blog/2015/04/20/in-some-states-access-to-abortion-care-is-expanding/)

[When Anti-choicers Try to Co-op #BlackLivesMatter](http://msmagazine.com/blog/2015/04/06/when-anti-choicers-co-opt-blacklivesmatter/)

[Farm Worker Activist Dolores Huerta on Women’s Cight to Choose](http://makingcontact.tumblr.com/post/116928024880/the-right-to-reproduction-has-never-been-simply-a)

[What Can Nick Cannon and Nicki Minaj Teach Us About Abortion](http://www.radioproject.org/2015/04/pop-music-and-reproductive-justice/)

[So Far, 2015 Is On Pace to Set Abortion Restriction Records](http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/30263-2015-on-pace-to-set-abortion-restriction-records)

**May**: 15 outlets participated in 4 collaborations on immigration policy that impact millions, private sector control of schools, and climate change -- including stories on the California drought and an investigation into Monsanto’s influence on Hawaii’s state university scholars to produce research that supports GMOs.

Free Speech Radio News / Defending Dissent / In These Times

[Millions in limbo as DACA/DAPA case winds through courts](http://fsrn.org/2015/05/millions-in-limbo-as-dacadapa-case-winds-through-courts/)

[5 Million Immigrants, Promised Safety From Deportation, Are Still Waiting](http://inthesetimes.com/article/17942/dapa-legal-maneuvering-keeps-millions-in-legal-limbo)

[DAPA Injunction Means Legal Limbo for Millions](http://www.defendingdissent.org/now/news/dapa-injunction-means-legal-limbo-for-millions/)

The Progressive / Earth Island Journal / YES! Magazine / Bitch Media / Truthout

[Letter from California: Field Notes on a State in Drought](http://www.progressive.org/news/2015/05/188129/letter-california-field-notes-state-drought)

[Even in a Drought, California Farms Have a Future—But They’ll Need Local Control to Succeed](http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/drought-california-farms-future-local-control-via-campesina)

[Want the Best Solutions for California’s Epic Drought?](http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/farmworkers-california-drought-susana-de-anda)

[Food Not Lawns](http://bit.ly/waterrights)

[An Interview With California Water Activist Susana De Anda](http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/30748-food-not-lawns-an-interview-with-california-drought-activist-susana-de-anda)

Cascadia Times / Earth Island Journal / Truthout / PR Watch / Public News Service / Hawaii Independent

[The Silencing of Hector Valenzuela](http://times.org/2015/05/19/the-silencing-of-hector-valenzuela/)

*As the University of Hawai‘i was cozying up to GMO giant Monsanto, one of the school’s professors says that he was forced to tolerate a climate of “bigotry, retaliation and hostility” for speaking out about the potential risks of genetic engineering. The university disputes his charges.*

The Progressive / AlterNet / In These Times / PR Watch

[The Secret Group That Wants to Take Over Your School](http://www.progressive.org/news/2015/05/188152/secret-group-wants-take-over-your-school)

**June**: 11 outlets participated in 5 collaborations that covered several issues, including the shift in the climate change debate, how the California drought is impacting migrant farm communities and the challenges pregnant women face in prison.

people.power.media / New America Media / Truthout

[Surviving the Drought in California: Farm Workers Struggle to Put Food on the Table](http://www.peoplepowermedia.net/immigration/california-drought-farm-workers)

RP&E / Making Contact / Defending Dissent

[Domestic Worker Triumphs Over Trafficking, Wins $136K Back Pay](http://reimaginerpe.org/20-2b/Muniz-Reyes)

[Domestic Workers Celebrate Bill of Rights](http://www.defendingdissent.org/now/news/domestic-workers-celebrate-bill-of-rights/)

[With Our Own Might, Migrant Women Fight for Change](http://reimaginerpe.org/labor-and-migrant-rights)

In These Times / Truthout  / The Progressive / Generation Progress

[The Death of Climate Denialism](http://inthesetimes.com/article/18040/the-death-of-climate-denialism)

[How the Border Security Industry Will Profit Hugely From Climate Change](http://inthesetimes.com/article/18046/a-hawks-eye-view-of-climate-change)

[A Hawk's Eye View of Climate Change](http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/31390-a-hawk-s-eye-view-of-climate-change)

Bitch Media / Truthout

[Women's Prisons as Sites of Resistance: An Interview With Victoria Law](http://www.truth-out.org/progressivepicks/item/31461-women-s-prisons-as-sites-of-resistance-an-interview-with-victoria-law)

**July**: So far, 3 outlets have participation in a collaboration about the inhumane conditions immigrant families endure in prisons, masked as detention centers.

In These Times / Feministing / Generation Progress

[The U.S. is Locking Up Immigrant Children in Prisons Under Inhumane Conditions](http://bit.ly/1LO0KRs)