

**The Media Consortium, a project of the Foundation for National Progress**

**Proposal Summary: Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Program**

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The future of our democracy depends on just, transformative media policy that connects citizens to the information and news that shapes their lives. Despite the great importance of media policy, there is a dearth of reporting on the issue. When media policy is covered, an enormous disconnect between the technical aspects of the issue and its affect on real people remains.

With this gap in mind, The Media Consortium, a network of the country’s leading progressive, independent, media outlets, is debuting a **Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Program** that will raise the issue of media policy to a new level of public awareness by supporting quality reporting and efficient content delivery to a diverse set of constituencies. The proposed pilot program includes three organizing components:

* Education: **Ongoing connections and briefing calls organized between Media Consortium members and media policy experts.** The Media Consortium has a history of organizing expert calls to train and educate members about the future of media industry. We have organized over a dozen such calls within a four-month time frame in 2010 alone for our Incubation and Innovation Lab program. The connections made between reporters and the media policy experts will not only inform reporting throughout the pilot program, they will also help to inform reporting and analysis for the long-term.
* Reporting: **Support for regular and consistent reporting/analysis on media policy news, events, breakdowns and more.** The Media Consortium has established a small reporting fund dedicated to media policy issues. From this pool, TMC is providing $5,000 to four media organizations (who are members of The Media Consortium) to dedicate to media policy reporting for three months. Organizations will be chosen according to diversity of platform, diversity of audience, and organizational capacity to participate in the program.
* Distribution: **Bi-weekly blogs rounding up the best reporting on media policy from Media Consortium members that are also distributed across the blogosphere.** The Media Consortium’s current MediaWires program is the perfect opportunity to raise the profile of the pilot program’s reporting. The four MediaWire blogs are picked up by 35 partners and media organizations, reaching a total aggregate audience of 7 million people. The MediaWires project also has extensive reach on social networks, including Facebook and Twitter.

These three elements will close the gap, help change the debate around media policy in our country, and shore up our democracy in the process. The pilot program will kick off in February and last through May. The National Conference for Media Reform in April will also be a major event that will be used as a resource during this program’s launch.

**Scaling up**

The Media Consortium has built a solid foundation for this program with funds generously contributed by the Media and Democracy Fund. But, with additional support, we can greatly the diversity, reach and influence of this content. This program is easily scalable and the issues covered by participating media outlets could reach critical mass with the addition of a few key components. A contribution of $5,000 from The Benton Foundation would make it possible for The Media Consortium to provide the following:

1. **More Coverage:** Bring in additional media outlets to produce a mix of breaking and investigative content that will reach underserved communities that are disproportionately impacted by media policy, but have little access to information about how this policy impacts their lives. We will place a special focus on including video, radio, and ethnic press. Support from the Benton Foundation would help us bring on potential candidates such as Public News Service, a radio reporting service that reaches millions of listeners in both urban and rural communities, and/or fund a content distribution partnership between the G.W. Williams Center for Independent Journalism, New America Media, and the New York Community Media Alliance. The partnership would distribute reporting to critical ethnic communities via a variety of ethnic and regional press. Cost: $3000.
2. **Expand Impact:** TMC will help to raise the profile and impact of reporting produced by its members through its bi-weekly blogs, which will be distributed for republication to dozens of additional media outlets and organizations. Content will also be pushed out to social media and other special promotional opportunities. We’ve undertaken similar efforts with great success and have secured multiple interviews on daily radio and online shows. Cost: $1100
3. **Deepen Connections:** TMC will provide additional staff time to develope of briefing calls, expand the promotional strategy for reporting, and create a listerv/database of media policy experts and resources for reporters to use in the production of reporting about media policy issues. Cost: $900

The Media Consortium is incredibly excited to have this opportunity to work with the Benton Foundation to increase the quality, reach and impact of critical reporting about media policy.