**DRAFT: Media Consortium 3.0**

Get ready for Media Consortium 3.0!

At our 2017 Transformative Media Conference, Media Consortium members told us you wanted to form a *media movement*.

We heard you describe a *solidarity network* that would work together to create meaningful impact on key issues.

We heard you ask for help in forming *equitable partnerships* between local media, especially media from culturally specific communities, and national media.

We heard you ask for a network that would *center grassroots communities* while providing opportunties for deep features and investigations at the national level.

We heard you and we are acting.

Over the next 12-18 months, current Media Consortium staff (Manolia Charlotin and Jo Ellen Kaiser) will leave their staffed positions in order to run the Impact Driver, a fee-for-service program to support and develop strong community-centered media hubs across the United States. We have already identified 18 hubs at various stages of growth, from established (like the Center for Community and Ethnic Media at CUNY) to start-up. We will work to support these hubs to be racially equitable and truly collaborative.

As the hubs mature, the Impact Driver will launch experimental reporting projects designed to realize the benefits of creating equitable local/national partnerships. These reporting projects, like ones we have run in the past, will provide payments to outlets to assign reporters to particular topics; will provide project management to support collaborations; and will provide PR and marketing for the stories produced. The aim of these projects will be to provide national impact on key issues by centering the stories of people in local communities most impacted by the issues.

Within two years, we expect to be able to connect these local hubs into the Media Consortium’s national network, and resume staffed positions—hopefully expanding staff. The fee-for-service program will remain as an increasing number of hubs join the network. Media Consortium 3.0 will feature an even more robust national conference; a member portal connecting outlets together; a collaborative digital space; and a continued emphasis on reporting projects.

Media Consortium 3.0 will serve as a meeting ground for all independent media, welcoming members of INN, LION, AAN, ACM, NFCB and non-affiliated media to participate in a broad network. While each of those associations will focus on the technical and business services required by different types of independent media, the Media Consortium itself will create a wide tent, providing guidelines and support for partnerships, collaborations, and other types of network building, all built on the foundation principles of racial equity and centering community.

**Background**

The belief that we are “stronger together” has always motivated the Media Consortium.

Media Consortium 1.0. Founded in 2006, the Media Consortium began as a small, member-led community of progressive news outlets that decided to work together to become sustainable in the new digital environment. By 2009, the Consortium had grown to 25 outlets and hired its first director, Tracy van Slyke. Van Slyke achieved the original goal of Media Consortium 1.0, using Innovation Labs to help members find success in the digital landscape. Since 2009, the Media Consortium has grown membership from 25 to over 80 outlets with less than a handful going out of business.

Key Insight: People will pay for media that speaks directly to their deepest concerns. Rather than aim for objectivity, Media Consortium members aim for accuracy and accountability rooted in transparently values-based reporting.

Media Consortium 2.0. Starting with the Occupy movement in 2012, the Media Consortium, now led by Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, changed focus from business to editorial to increase the quality, reach and impact of stories. With support from each other and from Media Consortium staff, quality has increased at our outlets, with Consortium members producing critical intersectional feature reporting on climate change, money in politics, immigration, reproductive rights, and other key issues. Consortium members regularly break stories that change politics, from Mitt Romney’s 47% (Mother Jones) to Steve Bannon’s recent exclusive interview with the American Prospect.

Key Insight: Change from a competitive to a collaborative culture. Focusing on editorial, the Media Consortium built a collaborative culture by fostering over 45 collaborative projects between 2014-2016. Now members regularly partner with each other on projects small and large, sharing reporters, co-publishing, and co-promoting content.

Media Consortium 3.0. The Black Lives Matter movement of 2015 prompted Consortium members to interrogate our practices through a lens of racial equity. Committing to founding our work on racial equity, we held a full-day racial equity workshop at our 2016 conference and hired Manolia Charlotin as Associate Director with a portfolio to build equity into every aspect of our work. This emphasis led directly to the Transformative Media Conference of 2017, and to the ideas behind Media Consortium 3.0.

Key Insight: The future of independent news requires developing racially equitable local/national partnerships.

**Mission**

Media Consortium 2.0 was a network of progressive independent news outlets guided by a mission to grow and strengthen the impact of the independent news sector.

Media Consortium 3.0 is a network of independent news outlets dedicated to building a racially equitable independent media ecosystem. Consortium members center the voices of culturally-specific communities, promote local/national partnerships, and work collaboratively to grow impact.

**Vision**

The stories of our communities have too often been told by those in power. We envision a media system that starts from the grassroots, fostering the growth of media centered in local and culturally specific communities.

Stories originating from Puerto Ricans living in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago; from white tobacco farmers near Springfield, Kentucky; from the Pima people living by the Gila River in Arizona; from Somali Muslims in Minneapolis or young black women from every state—these stories will make their way into news hubs and from there to regional and national news. The flow of stories from grassroots to grasstops will be conducted via partnership agreements that are equitable, respecting and rewarding the originators of the stories. Similarly, national stories may be localized by grassroots media, again via agreements respecting the story originators.

Critically, instead of decisions made at the top and pushed down, decision making in our vision will be decentralized, with every outlet choosing what stories to send through the network and what stories to pick up from the network. Outlets will work collaboratively, sharing resources and co-marketing content in order to ensure that stories are told by those most impacted and reach those most impacted.

**Values**

* Center Communities: Nothing About Us with out Us
* Practice Racial Equity
* Work Collaboratively
* Abide by SPJ’s Code of Journalism
* Be Accurate; Be Transparent; Be Accountable