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The intersecting worlds of media and politics are experiencing a rapid, tectonic shift. Media consolidation has diluted in-depth and investigative reporting and is causing a dearth of critical and diverse voices. While the scope of traditional media narrows, the Internet has created the space and opportunities for anyone to become information generators—making for an exciting and innovative environment for the independent media.

That's where The Media Consortium comes in. Our mission is to harness the opportunities, overcome the challenges, and create a new, game changing system that allows progressive, independent media to flourish. The Media Consortium provides the necessary incubating space for ideas and relationships that strengthen and transform progressive media organizations.

In 2008, The Media Consortium experienced extraordinary growth. We launched four dynamic projects, shored up organizational infrastructure, and began articulating a vigorous future for independent media. In 2007, The Media Consortium had two part-time staff and had started two projects. Today, we have two full-time and four part-time staff, project-based contractors, and almost 50 organizational members. We have also developed and fine-tuned the purpose, mission and ultimate strategy of The Media Consortium as a movement-building and sector-strengthening organization.

2009 promises to be a year of change for both the country and the independent media. The political tides will have shifted, no matter who becomes president. Millions of Americans have become engaged in the political process this year, many for the first time.

In this context, 2009 also promises to be a year of great opportunity for The Media Consortium. We will be able to help our members build on this newfound political fervor in order to engage new audiences while continuing to serve our current base. Simultaneously, we will be engaged in the accelerating transformation of the media landscape as we cope with issues of financial sustainability, technological advancements, and the changing nature of journalism itself. The Media Consortium's key role is to coordinate with members to foster new ventures that will advance and strengthen the progressive, independent media sector, and the very foundation of democracy itself. Past support from the Open Society Institute has been integral to The Media Consortium's successful development of these vital initiatives.

About The Media Consortium

In early March 2005, two-dozen leaders from the worlds of independent print, radio, television, and Internet media answered a call from *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, and *The American Prospect* to discuss "Independent Media and the Future of Democracy." It was the first time in at least a decade that independent media content producers and distributors came together to talk about strengthening our effectiveness. We continued the conversation through 2005, expanding to include many more media organizations. Our goal: to figure out how a network of independent media could address two challenges we all face:

- How to amplify independent journalism's voice in broader public debates over the crucial political and social issues of our times.
- How to navigate the current wave of profound technological change - change that is reshaping the media business, not to mention redefining the practice of journalism itself.

In early 2006, we coalesced to become The Media Consortium, (in the words of our mission statement):
“To amplify our voices; increase our collective clout; leverage our current audiences and reach out to new ones; attract financial resources; strengthen and transform our individual businesses and our sector’s position in a rapidly changing media and political environment; and redefine ourselves and progressivism for a new century.

The Media Consortium is now a network of almost 50 leading independent journalism organizations that work in print, online, on television, and on the radio. Our current members are:

Afro-Netizen	Hightower Lowdown	RealTV/IWT
Air America Radio	In These Times	Regional News Network
AlterNet	LinkTV	Salon Media Group, Inc.
American Forum	Mother Jones	Sojourners
American News Project	Ms. Magazine	South End Press
The American Prospect	The Nation	Talking Points Memo
Balcony Films	Nation Institute	Texas Observer
Brave New Films	National Alliance for Media Arts	Truthdig
Berrett-Koehler Publishers	and Culture (NAMAC)	The Uptake
Center for Independent Media	National Radio Project	Warandpiece.com
Chelsea Green Publishers	New America Media	The Washington Monthly
ColorLines	New Press	WireTap
Democracy Now	New Voices in Independent	Women's Media Center
Free Speech TV	Journalism	Workers Independent News
GlobalVision/Media Channel	OneWorld US	YES! Magazine
GoLeftTV	The Progressive	The Young Turks
Grist.org	Public News Service	
High Country News	Raw Story	

The Media Consortium has several projects that have been launched or are in development, nearly all of them generated during Consortium-facilitated discussions and meetings among member organizations. Each of our strategic projects in 2008 is tied to one of The Media Consortium’s three basic target areas; building connections, infrastructure, and voice.

Connection

Member Meetings

The Media Consortium holds two yearly membership meeting to discuss new ideas, strategize, and strengthen one-on-one relationships. On May 5 and 6, more than 65 members, friends, and allies converged in Denver, Colorado for The Media Consortium's eighth membership meeting. The two-day meeting focused on action.

We debuted several key projects including “Live From Main Street,” “The Media Wires” project and the Online Advertising Network (all described below) during the Denver meeting. In the form of member-organized "Media Labs", small groups were formed to provide in-depth peer-to-peer assistance sessions focused on Web 2.0, advertising and marketing. Last but not least, Tracy Van Slyke, Media Consortium Project Director, and strategic consultant Tony Deifell, president of Next Consulting, led two large-scale brainstorming sessions focused on surfacing key questions around the progressive media landscape. Four key small-groups emerged:

- Strategic Collaborations/Multi-purposing Content
- The Big Game Changer
- Ad Revenue Opportunities
- Threats and Opportunities of New Demographics

On both the first and second days, the break out groups focused on creating a central question of inquiry around each issue, outlining the top three reasons that it was a priority, and identifying the key questions around this issue. These central inquiry questions and sub-questions have been integrated into the organization's strategic process throughout 2008.

Denver was selected as the meeting site in advance of the Democratic National Convention. This created a unique opportunity to learn more about the changing dynamics of the region and its larger impact on the national landscape. Moderator David Sirota led a lively session with Paul Larmer, Publisher, *High Country News*; Bobby Clark, deputy director, Progress Now; Emily Parkey, lead organizer, Rights For All People; and Wendy Norris, managing editor, *Colorado Confidential*/Center for Independent Media. Panelists discussed how the region acts as a microcosm for issues including immigration, environmentalism, and progressive organizing, and also discussed the role of progressive and mainstream media in getting the message out and informing elected officials and their constituencies. In another session, local organizers and activists were brought in to discuss Media Consortium members' coverage, organizing and logistics as they prepared for the DNC.

The MC Listserv

When the Media Consortium was first taking shape, there were few places for progressive media leaders to interact, build deep professional relationships, and address larger structural issues. The connectivity tools launched at the founding of The Media Consortium have finally borne fruit. The listserv is used to solicit ideas and convey updates on Media Consortium activities, projects, and events. It is also a place for members to share ideas and information with each other. In the latter part of 2008, the listserv has served as a key resource to facilitate action, dialogue, and collaboration around Media Consortium projects.

Members and allies are also sharing information that has led to non-consortium collaborations. Based on a thread from our listserv, MoveOn.org turned the Department of Health and Human Services attempts to re-brand contraception as abortion into an email-based action.

"The MC has played a central role in this collaboration," wrote Amy Newman, Managing Editor of RH Reality Check "[By] working with Move On, Public News Service, [RH Reality Check] and others, MoveOn was able to gather 325,000 signatures for this action, and RH Reality Check saw our largest number of readers in one week and one of our most successful series of feature stories/articles in the history of our site."

The listserv continues to be a hotbed of discussion and up to date reports. Members and allies used the listserv to inform and organize during the arrests of journalists (including Media Consortium members Democracy Now, The Real News, Public News Service, and The Uptake) throughout the Republican National Convention.

Infrastructure

Creating Progressive Media "Game Changers"

The very core of The Media Consortium is to advance and strengthen the progressive, independent media sector. Our members agree that now is the moment to think and act big. Thanks to this energy, Media Consortium Project Director Tracy Van Slyke and members of the Coordinating Committee have worked closely with consultants Tony Deifell and Nicole Boyer to craft the direction of our strategic research and development project which has centered on the creation and implementation of "game changer" projects.

We define game changers as:

Developments, 'disruptive' innovations, projects, ideas that could significantly increase the impact and influence of independent media in the next five years. By definition, these aren't incremental but really intended to 'change the game' you're playing in.

In addition to integrating many of the questions and ideas that came out of the May meeting, Tony, Nicole and Tracy interviewed all Media Consortium Coordinating Committee members and several outside experts in the fields of media, technology, politics, and financing. These interviews provided perspective on current

opportunities, challenges and uncertainties for the sector as well as new possibilities for The Media Consortium and its members to significantly impact and change the landscape. This information formed the base of a two-day strategy meeting in July for Coordinating Committee members.

Outsiders were invited to the meeting to provide "outside-in" thinking, which is useful in breaking internal groupthink dynamics as well as provide additional information and perspectives. Our guests included:

- Art Kleiner, Editor-in-Chief, *Strategy+Business* magazine
- Mitty Owens, Senior Deputy Director, NYC Office of Financial Empowerment, former program officer at Ford Foundation
- Mike Stanton, Publisher, *The Bond Buyer* (leading daily newspaper of public finance)

These discussions were the first round of game changing strategy brainstorming as well as the potential 2009 projects. The game changers strategic exploration and development process will continue through late October and will include input from all Media Consortium members and additional outside experts. The process intends for members to think outside of their everyday activities and to shift into creative brainstorming.

The end product will be three new game changing project ideas. These ideas will be laid out in a dynamic presentation coupled with short report that places the game changers within a strategy framework. We are excited to develop and produce tangible member-driven projects that will significantly shift the media landscape in the not-so-distant future.

Ad Network

Over the last few years, the rise of online advertising has drastically changed business models across the entire media sector. While many independent media outlets are building out their online advertising capacity, these changes can be costly to implement, technologically difficult, and due to the smaller web presence of some organizations, do not offer guaranteed returns on such a hefty investment. Successful web advertising strategies do have the potential to generate significant amounts of income, however the field is often difficult to parse and even harder to navigate. The solution? Build an advertising network that pools the collective inventories of Consortium members to make a highly marketable package.

In February, The Media Consortium hired consulting firm MarketTechnique to explore opportunities in building an online ad network for progressive media outlets. MarketTechnique and Media Consortium staff interviewed 10 MC members around their current advertising platforms, needs, and revenue opportunities. The Media Consortium also conducted a study of the entire network, assessing the interest and viability of forming an online advertising network. Results included:

- 26 organizations have a total of 4,549,753 unique visitors and 55,776,186 pageviews per month.
- 24 organizations have email products that go out around once a week, reaching approximately 1,002,671 names. Of those 26 respondents, 12 offer ads on their email products.
- 12 respondents currently offer ads on their websites and three to four are interested in incorporating them.

During this time, MarketTechnique surveyed the larger online advertising space and evaluated both the viability of a Media Consortium ad network and what would be needed to build it. MarketTechnique created a presentation and report around the current online advertising sector and implications for Media Consortium members at the May Meeting.

Armed with this information, we determined that there was a potential significant opportunity for The Media Consortium to help members move into the online advertising network space. Also noted was that certain Media Consortium members needed support in developing their online ad sales strategies. Media Consortium members AlterNet, Air America, *Mother Jones* and *The Nation* came together as the founding outlets for a progressive media ad network. MarketTechnique and Media Consortium staff continued to work with the Consortium and the ad network's founding members through July. These four Media Consortium members are now advancing the network. This is a great milestone--we are so excited to be empowering our members to take lead on projects that benefit the whole, not just one organization.

Voice

MediaWires

The core mission of The Media Consortium is to leverage the resources of its members to impact political discourse and debate. With this goal in mind, we are harnessing new technologies, social networking applications and distribution opportunities to launch the first phase of a system that will allow members to share content, increase web traffic, reach new audiences and build the overall impact of the progressive, independent media.

The Media Consortium has partnered with Common Sense New Media to launch its "MediaWire" project using Common Sense's existing NewsLadder technology and distribution tools. We have built a series of one-stop shops offering the best in "progressive, independent media" on these topics. We also are providing a reporting resource for journalists, organizations, lawmakers and their staffs, and bloggers on these specific issues.

First, the newsladder.net site is the aggregation spot to find TMC member content organized by specific issue. All Media Consortium members have a special "tmc" icon next to its content to differentiate it from other content on the site. Users are also able to vote the content up and down and are also able to post their own content on the site. The Media Consortium is currently sponsoring three newsladders:

- John McCain: <http://johnmccain.newsladder.net/>
- Immigration: <http://immigration.newsladder.net/>
- Healthcare: <http://healthcare.newsladder.net/>

TMC member content is also being filtered into: Iraq (iraq.newsladder.net); Troop/Veterans issues (outroops.newsladder.net), Criminal justice reform (justice.newsladder.net) and Environmental/Sustainability issues (sustain.newsladder.net).

Along with the consortium-sponsored NewsLadder sites, we have built out new ways to share and distribute the content among MC members and to new audiences. Widgets featuring MC member headlines (and links) are available for MC members and organizations to place on their own sites. In addition, these widgets have been built to integrate into the Media Consortium's Facebook page, members and organizational Facebook pages and individual profiles. The Facebook page also includes opportunities for MC members to post their own events, videos, and other content--a meta-Facebook page for the entire progressive media sector. Facebook will be accompanied by regular Twitter feeds that will also distribute the content.

Last but not least, original weekly blogs will round up the "best of/most interesting" journalism by MC members on these three topic areas. These posts will be available to all MC members and posted throughout the blogosphere. A weekly email also goes out to newsladder e-newsletter subscribers promoting MC member content.

Live From Main Street

Live from Main Street is a tour of the U.S. in Election Year 2008, hosted by GRITtv's Laura Flanders and produced by The Media Consortium. In five months, Live from Main Street (www.livefrommainstreet.org) will feature five town halls, each focusing on a key national issue through a local lens. The town halls are broadcast on multiple radio and television channels and written about in print and online outlets. While Live from Main Street had a separate budget, The Media Consortium allocated \$60,000 and significant staff time on strategic development, fundraising, and management. Live from Main Street's goals are to:

- Strengthen progressive, independent media infrastructure through innovative partnerships
- Engage new and existing audiences with quality, independent news and information
- Inspire political participation
- Change the tenor and scope of election coverage
- Highlight important local/national issues

To date, Live from Main Street has had three tremendously successful town hall events in Minneapolis, Miami and Denver. Each provided unique opportunities for local and national partnership, collaboration, and movement strategizing from both inside and outside of The Media Consortium. Clips from all the Live From Main Street town halls can be found at livefrommainstreet.org or youtube.com/livefrommainstreet.

Materials from the town halls are available for open source distribution among Media Consortium members, allies and partners to virally disseminate around the Internet for maximum impact. Members of The Media Consortium are also producing original content connected to the issues of each town hall. Our members have also participated in "Housing Investigation Week" in advance of Live from Main Street Miami—and we're looking forward to the results from the investigation week focused on Voting Rights and Election Protection for our fourth town hall.

Live from Main Street has partnered with national outlets and groups including MoveOn.org, Free Press, FireDogLake, and many others to publicize and disseminate this content. Local groups and partnerships range from Progress Ohio to the Miami Worker's Center. We have heard from many local community members and attendees who are excited that independent media is paying attention to the issues and people that the mainstream media has ignored. Live from Main Streets town halls have been covered in local radio interviews, newspaper articles and blogs. We're successfully propelling vital issues to new levels of media and public awareness.

"At 'Live from Main Street Miami,' local citizens had a chance to voice their concerns – speaking directly to those responsible for elements of the crisis through a representative from Countrywide Mortgage who was on a LFMS panel-and offering innovative solutions for how to deal with the economic crisis," said Live from Main Street Producer Tracy Fleischman. "In addition, Live from Main Street Denver' served as a unique kick-off event for the DNC, giving local and national progressive leaders a chance to put forth a real agenda for change for the DNC. It was streamed live on a dozen Media Consortium member web sites and blogs. Over 500 people attended the event. LFMS Denver truly gave a platform to the voices of everyday Americans."

We'll wrap the project up in October with "Live from Main Street Seattle: Women on Real National Security," which will take a much-needed look at what real national security means to women. What makes Americans feel secure - is it our military or our social policies? LFMS will explore what makes women feel secure about living in the U.S. as well as how policy might change with a broader cross-section of society at the decision-making table. At the conclusion of Live from Main Street, we will do a full-on analysis of how this project succeeded and lessons learned that will help inform future Media Consortium projects.

Syndicated Reporting Project

After many consortium members noted that they did not have the resources to cover specific beats on an ongoing basis, The Media Consortium launched a syndicated reporting service that has become an innovative model of open-source journalism creation and distribution. In July 2007, The Media Consortium hired reporter Brian Beutler as its Washington Correspondent to cover Congressional Oversight and National Security. In early 2008, we hired Adele Stan as Executive Editor of this project.

There was a lot of excitement about this project within the first six months of its launch. Thanks to RSS and hyperlink technology, as well as to Brian's reputation within Washington D.C.'s progressive blogging community, the articles have moved from members' sites to the larger public. Beutler's and Stan's stories have been published by seven Consortium member organizations, including AlterNet, *ColorLines*, *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*, *The American Prospect*, *The Progressive*, and the Women's Media Center. In addition, Beutler's and Stan's reporting has been linked and quoted by a number of blogs and websites including Slate, The Atlantic Online, Care 2, Common Dreams, Huffington Post and Talking Points Memo.

While this was an exciting for the initial launch phase of the project, over time we did not see a rise in the number of Media Consortium members picking up the content. The structural barriers included internal resources and policies along with differing needs (reporting, analysis, issue beat, audio, video) of member organizations. We were in the process of finding and adding new reporters, starting with an economy beat,

but decided to hold back on advancing the process once we hit The Media Consortium's strategic planning phase.

Based on the output of the strategic retreat in New York, the Syndicated Reporting project will be temporarily closing shop at the end of September as we develop new opportunities to support and strengthen independent reporting. In addition, due to health reasons, Brian Beutler has stepped down from his position.

But this is not the final end of this initiative and goal. Through our "game changing" review process, we are looking at how the project can go through an evolution that supports more Media Consortium members directly and scales up the influence and impact of progressive reporting overall.

What's In Store for 2009

The Media Consortium continues on a positive and proactive trajectory. 2008 was a tremendous growth year for the organization and has provided valuable lessons to hone our strategic goals and projects. We are taking these lessons and applying them to projects that are currently in development for 2009. Also in our planning for next year, we are providing the space and flexibility to integrate ideas and strategies generated from our game changing planning process that will be complete in November.

Throughout the past few months, Coordinating Committee members reviewed current projects and have zeroed in on strategic guidelines for Media Consortium initiatives and projects in 2009. Four major principles have emerged during this time that will organize and shape our future endeavors. Projects are organized and vetted based on fulfilling these principles, which are: Foster Collaboration and Strengthen Infrastructure; Support Audience Development; Build and Diversify a Media Leadership Pipeline; and Bring Money into the Sector.

Foster Collaboration and Build Infrastructure

"I think there is more of a hunger on the part of a larger segment of the public to access better and more information about the huge issues facing all of us. Independent media is poised to become that institutional resource across platforms. I think it would be great for the MC to help build projects that put forward this larger vision."

"I think there is tremendous opportunity for collaborative media that engages specific communities as both media makers and consumers."

-July 2008 responses from Media Consortium Coordinating Committee members and outside experts as part of the "strategic game changers" survey

The Media Consortium focuses on how to create spaces for networking and collaboration among its members—whether its within or outside of Media Consortium initiatives. The biannual in-person meetings, listserv and website are critical to providing active engagement opportunities for our members. We are constantly evaluating how to continue to improve these tools and support systems. For example, we are currently redesigning our website to include more information on Media Consortium projects, Media Consortium members' work to the public. We are also creating an online space that will feed articles and information on everything from technology, journalism questions, reports, etc... to help inform our members in their day-to-day activities and future planning.

We are also developing a new project that fulfills this goal.

Strategic Collaboration and Innovation Fund:

Throughout the past few years, The Media Consortium has experimented organizing both small and large collaborations from member-coordinated coverage around the release of Brave New Film's *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* early on, and are currently supporting Live From Main Street. Through collaboration we leverage the individual strengths of many media outlets and create a larger impact on the political debate—and a direct benefit for participating members. We also want to foster collaboration that helps

individual members integrate new technology, community building and journalism philosophies that can expand and strengthen their organizations.

Based on experience, if a collaboration organized by The Media Consortium is not successful, it is because members don't have the resources to participate. Other times, the perspectives or needs of individual organizations don't mesh with the collaboration subject or product. In response, we are creating a new strategy and project to increase the success and impact of our collaborative efforts.

We are creating a ground-up, member-driven model that will allow members to brainstorm and manage their own collaboration ideas with the support of The Media Consortium. A "Strategic Collaboration and Innovation Fund" for MC members will encourage them to think outside-the-box and create critical partnerships with each other. Collaboration criteria and application process are in development. The Media Consortium will assemble an outside group of journalists and media experts to evaluate and vet submissions. This project offers an opportunity to leverage our members' strengths to have a vital impact on democratic debate.

Audience Development

"We've made first steps toward identifying the scale we currently operate in, and what we're seeing is that we reach only a portion of the potential core audience for our content. This is the single biggest challenge we have to deal with in everything we do."

"We need to figure out how our potential audiences define news--and how they're getting it. We need to figure out how our desired demographics consume media, and then work to provide MC member content in those channels."

-July 2008 responses from Media Consortium Coordinating Committee members and outside experts as part of the "strategic game changers" survey

In 2006, The Media Consortium decided to figure out how big our choir is—and who those choristers are. After contracting Paradyz-Matera, a list management and analysis firm, 16 consortium members agreed to pour their various lists – subscribers, donors, registered online users, newsletter subscribers, and so on – into a single file. Paradyz-Matera cleaned up (“de-duped”) the file, ran a series of demographic overlays on the data, and reported back to the Consortium at 2006 meeting in Los Angeles. We learned that:

- These 16 organizations had a combined file size of 2.9 million names (about the same size as MoveOn.org's file): 1.8 million confirmed regular mail names, and 1.1 million confirmed email addresses.
- Only 1 in 4 names on the original list is shared between two or more organizations – to put it another way, 75% of the original list is served by only one media outlet, meaning there is very little audience crossover.

The size of the file size alone tells us that collectively we are a sector with significant influence. It also demonstrates that we have real opportunities to grow our audience, which could have a critical effect on the economic models of these organizations and the impact and reach of their journalism.

MediaWire

The Media Wire project is the first significant step in leveraging and strategically distributing our members' content through new distribution channels, organizational allies and online tools. Throughout 2008, we will be both promoting this project on a regular basis and evaluating its impact. In 2009, we will take this evaluation into hand as we grow, adjust and develop the project. We are looking to maintain what we have already created, and build out topics, integrate new ideas and technologies, and be proactive in helping our members build their brands, increase audiences and have an impact on the democratic debate.

Audience Development Questions

One of the big criteria and questions as part of the game changing strategy process is "How do we triple our collective audience in five years?" What seems like a simple question has many sub-questions embedded within it. Who is this audience we want to reach and how are they currently accessing media and

information? What are the implications for the journalism we are producing now and the journalism of the future? Will this new and expanded audience influence and strengthen our economic sustainability?

Through the next few months, The Media Consortium will be closely examining these questions and the current assumptions of the progressive, independent media. By 2009, we will have carved out the next step in deterring how to create a game changer project that will allow us to start responding to new strategies and opportunities.

Build and Diversify Media Leadership Pipeline

"There is tremendous ferment in the media world right now, driven by cool, smart, young journalists (and some of their older pals) who 'get' that the future has yet to be invented."

"Biggest challenge to progressive media: honest, intellectually embracing, not walling ourselves off from the millions of people who worry about that progressive elites look down on them."

-July 2008 Responses from Media Consortium Coordinating Committee members and outside experts as part of the "strategic game changers" survey

What is the Media Leadership Pipeline? Rachel Maddow. Jeremy Scahill. Amy Goodman. In addition to their amazing talents, these individuals have broken through the mainstream media system because of the support and platforms provided by progressive media outlets and allies. As public faces of the progressive media they have helped to coalesce, diversify, and legitimize progressive media analysis and journalism to a broader audience. It's our long-term strategy to help our members support and launch the journalists of today and tomorrow. This involves a three-point process.

Phase 1: Getting our Future Journalists Started

The Right has been investing time and money in their future leaders for years--the results that we see now in the likes of Bill O'Reilly, and many other, untold conservative reporters and pundits. If progressive media were to show the same initiative and dedication to developing talent, we could attract dedicated workers and visionaries from a young age, helping to ensure the longevity of our respective organizations and foster the kinds of innovative thinking necessary to building a successful media sphere. With the right initiative we could help develop the next generation of media leaders and journalists, specifically looking to focus on diversity, including women, people of color, and varying income backgrounds.

Phase 2: Creating the Media Darlings

Many mid-career journalists within the progressive media, ethnic media and the larger media landscape are not provided with the resources and support necessary to flourish. Our goal is to determine the best ways to help Media Consortium members identify and provide support for these experienced journalists who have the ability to breakthrough to a broader swath of audiences and decision-makers and help impact the political debate. Additionally, we want to work with members to incubate and support journalists that represent the audiences our members are trying to reach. The aim would be to new audiences – the progressive elements of the new “Obama” coalition of younger voters, women, and Blacks, Latinos, Asians, etc.

As the media landscape changes, so does the conceptualization of a high-impact journalist. We want to support innovation and experimentation on how these journalists and media outlets can integrate and distribute their work through new platforms, technologies and audience engagement opportunities.

Making the Media Darlings

If we want to make the media darlings, we need to put in the effort to promote, publicize, and connect them to the establishment media, additional progressive media, targeted audiences, allies, and even unlikely allies. These new and established journalists can help act as bridges to targeted, diverse audiences for the individual outlets and the sector as a whole. The Media Consortium will help create and implement a plan that embraces traditional and innovative strategic communication strategies that will actively push out and brand these journalists as critical voices in today and tomorrow's democracy.

These are firmly established project goals for The Media Consortium in 2009. A diverse range of members strongly believe that building a successful media pipeline will dramatically scale up the progressive media as a whole and have tangible benefits to individual media outlets. Exact specs and roll out plans for the pipeline projects are still in development. We hope to launch a beta version in 2009 in order to feel out possible areas of improvement and growth for further expansion in 2010.

Bring Money Into the Sector

"What are the best business model(s) given ongoing changes in media marketplace, funding and technology?"

-July 2008 responses from Media Consortium Coordinating Committee members and outside experts as part of the "strategic game changers" survey

The economic sustainability of the media is plaguing both mainstream and independent media. We have already advanced specific ideas and projects in 2008, such as the online advertising network, but we must continue to explore and push the boundaries for new ideas to transition into a stable and flourishing sector.

We believe that we have a unique opportunity to reshape the playing field for the progressive, independent media because Media Consortium members have a strong history of collaboration and partnership. Ideas and projects around the future of journalism, community building, outside economic factors and new technologies are being brought into this process. New ideas have emerged from the game changing strategic planning process and we will continue this deliberation over the next few months. By 2009, we will have tangible next steps in the quest for creating a sustainable progressive, independent media.

Organizational Structure and Development

Governance and Staffing

Currently, The Media Consortium is a project of the Foundation for National Progress, the 501c3 entity that also publishes *Mother Jones* magazine. While the FNP board of directors has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the project, a coordinating committee annually elected by participating members oversees The Consortium's activities. The coordinating committee is a diverse group, representative of the media outlets that make up The Media Consortium. Current committee members include:

Jay Harris: Co-chair

Publisher and president, Mother Jones

Rinku Sen: Co-Chair

Publisher, ColorLines

Julie Bergman-Sender

Principal, Balcony Films

Lark Corbeil

Executive Director Public News Service

Ann Friedman

Deputy Editor, The American Prospect

Don Hazen

Executive Editor, AlterNet.org

Andrew Golis,

Deputy Publisher, Talking Points Memo

Carol Jenkins

Executive Director, Women's Media Center

Linda Jue

New Voices in Independent Media

Steve Katz

Vice President, Mother Jones

Roberto Lovato

East Coast director, New America Media

Kim Spencer

Executive director, LinkTV

Katherine Spillar

Executive Editor, Ms. Magazine

Tracy Van Slyke is the Project Director of The Media Consortium. As the former publisher of *In These Times*, a national, award-winning national magazine, Tracy oversaw the publication's strategic development, financial management, fundraising, circulation and promotion. She is currently on the leadership council for the Progressive Communicator's Network and on the board of the National Training and Information Center. In former lives she has been a working journalist and the communications director at a national organization. In 2005 and 2006, she and Jessica Clark co-authored the landmark articles on strengthening the progressive media landscape including, "Making Connections: Why is the news so bad? What can progressives do to fix it?" and "Welcome to the Media Revolution: How today's

media makers are shaping tomorrow's news." With Clark, Van Slyke is also the Co-editor of www.buildtheecho.net and co-authoring a book on the impact of the progressive media on the political and media landscape from 2004-2008. (2009, The New Press.)

Prior to joining The Media Consortium's staff full-time as Program Associate, **Erin Polgreen** was the Associate Publisher for *In These Times* magazine, where she managed advertising, marketing, event planning, and other outreach initiatives. From August 2004 through May 2005, Erin served with City Year Chicago, an Americorps program. As a Senior Corps member, she co-led a team of literacy tutors at an elementary school on the West side of Chicago. She is an avid cyclist and sits on the board of Working Bikes Cooperative, a Chicago-area non-profit.

Membership

The Media Consortium staff and membership committee advanced its primary goals for 2008. On the infrastructure end, we will continue to recruit members that fit the following strategic criteria:

- Bring a strategic value to the long-term goals of The Media Consortium.
- Play well with others.
- Have the staff capacity and resources to participate in The Media Consortium.
- Hit major diversity goals and continue to help fulfill The MC's mission.

The Membership Committee has created several organizational documents that make MC membership transparent. Our Membership Mandate outlines the role MC members play as a part of the consortium and the qualifying criteria for MC membership. We have also introduced a questionnaire for vetting potential members that allows all interested organizations the same level of attention.

Budget and Fundraising for 2009

The Media Consortium's 2009 budget is expected to be approximately 502,000 (see attached). Proposals and renewals are being developed including: \$100,000 from the Surdna Foundation, \$50,000 from the Wallace Global Fund, and \$50,000 from the Arca Foundation. The Jo List Estate has set aside \$50,000 for The Media Consortium that will be distributed before the end of 2008. We also have a small list of excited individual donors who significantly contribute to The Media Consortiums activities. In 2007, we implemented a modest dues and fees structure, in which participating organizations will contribute to the support of the Consortium's operations. And finally, we expect to have a carryover from 2008 of approximately \$50,000.

Slightly more than \$228,000 is allocated for personnel and administrative costs including staff and contractors as well as organizational support, travel, legal, and website hosting. An additional staff person will allow us to burrow into increased coordination around membership coordination and internal organizational support. The balance \$250,000 of the total budget – is allocated to direct program expenses for projects focused on fulfilling The Media Consortium's goals and strategies. The rest is set aside for administrative costs.

This budget captures the full baseline of current activities and expansion on current projects. Additional budget items for new projects including Building and Diversifying the Media Pipeline and the Strategic Collaboration and Innovation Funds will require additional fundraising—for which The Media Consortium is committed.

The budget stability and desire for growth demonstrates that the organization continues to draw support from its members, funders and allies and that its initiatives are continuing to develop and deepen in order to have an important impact on the independent media sector. Therefore, on behalf of the 50 participating organizations that make up The Media Consortium, we seek renewal grant of \$125,000.