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Final Report on the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project, 2014

**Review of Goals and Objectives:**

The primary aim of the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project is to increase and deepen the quality of reporting on media policy issues by training reporters in the media policy beat. The vision of the project is to build trust between reporters, media outlets, policy advocates, and grassroots activists in order to open up a pathway for creating the kind of impact that leads to real, lasting social change.

This year, the Media Consortium’s Executive Director, Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, took on a larger role as a liaison between media policy issues and members. Through a generous travel grant from MDF, Jo Ellen represented the Media Consortium at the IGF in Istanbul. As an active member of the NN-action listserv, Jo Ellen advised activists on how best to reach independent outlets, and pushed important net neutrality content towards Consortium members. One result was an across-the-board increase in net neutrality stories produced by Consortium members.

Our biggest success this year was taking media policy out of the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project and making it a cornerstone of the work of the Media Consortium as a whole. With approval of its governing committee, The Media Consortium became a signatory to legal briefs put forward by the Committee to Protect Journalists. And for the third year in a row, a media policy issue—police surveillance--was the [theme of our annual conference](http://www.tmc2015.org). [[1]](#footnote-1)

**Summary of Project Activities and Outcomes:**

1) Quantitative Benchmarks:

We are pleased with our quantitative benchmarked successes this year:

* 8 outlets participated in MPREP: Truthout, PNS, In These Times, Making Contact, Tikkun, Bitch Media, People.Power.Media and Waging Nonviolence.
* 4 fellows were recruited to MPREP: Mike Ludwig, Truthout; Mark Scheerer, Public News Service; George Lavender, Making Contact; Jay Cassano, Waging Nonviolence (also Fast Company).
* 5 new reporters were recruited to MPREP: Sarah Mirk, Bitch; Kwan Booth, Making Contact; Sarah Berlin, In These Times; Dyan Ruiz, People.Power.Media; Sam Ross-Brown, Tikkun
* 2 in-person events and 5 phone calls were held in 2014.
* 53 stories were produced: 31 feature stories plus 22 story versions from PNS

This year saw an uptick in the number of feature stories produced through the program, despite a slight decrease in the number of briefings. We attribute this uptick to the increased focus on media policy throughout the Consortium.

We were pleased this year to have a number of new reporters on the media policy beat. Sarah Berlin, Dyan Ruiz, Kwan Booth and Sam Ross-Brown had never reported on media policy before entering our program.

We had hoped and planned to produce more background briefings. Because of a lag in our program between the conclusion of the previous grant in February 2014 and the start of the new grant in May 2014, we did not start our briefings until May. The briefing schedule in the fall was disrupted because of short-staffing; the ED’s attention was focused on the organization’s upcoming merger. With the February 2015 conference we resume our focus on media policy, and will once again be conducting briefings each month through the spring. We aim to have completed 7 briefing calls between May 2014 and May 2015, in addition to 3 in person events.

**2)** Qualitative Benchmarks

This year, for the first time, media policy reporters produced multimedia media policy stories. (See below). Through these media we believe we can reach a more diverse audience than digital or print.

Once again, we emphasized in-person events, which enable us to deepen the relationship between media policy reporters and their sources. Bringing media policy experts like Bea Edwards and Malkia Cyril to our annual meetings has been especially important in helping all reporters understand the importance of covering media policy.

We had hoped to leverage the power of personal connections by creating a workshop at the FCC in 2014. That did not happen primarily because we were unable to find partners to host the workshop—renting space in DC is exorbitant. We still believe creating a workshop is the right direction to take this program, especially since NCMR does not appear to be happening in 2015. Instead of trying to go this alone, we will partner with Media Alliance, Allied Media Projects, and other organizations to make this happen.

With permission of MDF, we have used some of the dollars that were allocated to a FCC workshop to fund travel grants for MPREP fellows. Mike Ludwig used a travel grant to attend the Quartz conference, and as a result wrote an in-depth article on zero-rating, a new area for him. Jay Cassano is using a travel grant to cover the People’s Open Network, a mesh network in Oakland. We also partly funded a piece he did on Comcast/TimeWarner for City Limits. The remainder of these funds covered our increased project management cost to monitor and support the Net Neutrality effort.

**One Story**

Dyan Ruiz is the co-founder of Media Consortium member People.Power.Media, a small two-person multimedia shop based in San Francisco with an audience based in the San Francisco Bay Area; Toronto, Canada; and the Phillipines.

When we put out a call for media policy reporters, Dyan contacted us. She wrote:

*As a co-founder of an independent media organization, I am very concerned about limits to access to information technology, especially concerning limits to information produced by or that would benefit already marginalized communities.*

Her [second piece](http://www.peoplepowermedia.net/independent-media-arts/fcc-internet-changes-impact-people-of-color) for us on net neutrality focused directly on how this issue could impact people of color. This video intercuts an interview from CMJ’s Steven Renderos with video from the Oscar Grant and Michael Brown shootings, showing how critical it is for citizens in marginalized communities to be able to publish. Dyan then interviews Harrison Chastang, the News Director of the Bay Area’s only black radio stations, KPOO, who talks about how a fast lane/slow lane would negatively impact his station. The last interview subject is Adam Gold of Causa Justa, talking about the importance of access to underserved communities.

For Dyan, the MPREP training was critical to her ability to report on the issue:

*I was connected to the top authorities on the subjects I was reporting on and given a basic understanding on these complex issues before reporting.*

Very few mainstream or even progressive media outlets have covered how net neutrality impacts people of color. Beyond that, Dyan’s video brought that story in multimedia, a format easy to share and repurpose for activist campaigns.

**Conclusion**

The Media Consortium’s MPREP program is seeding news outlets with media policy expertise. Our program focuses on aspects of media policy that aren’t being covered elsewhere. We are proud of our work, and thank MDF for its ongoing support.

1. **Certificate**

   All activities Foundation for National Progress were and are consistent under the Internal Revenue Code Sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1), (2) or (3). If any lobbying was conducted by Foundation for National Progress (whether or not discussed in this report), Foundation for National Progress complied with the applicable limits of Internal Revenue Code Sections 501(c)(3) and/or 501(h) and 4911. Foundation for National Progress warrants that it is in full compliance with its Grant Agreement with the New Venture Fund, dated March 10, 2014, and that, if the grant was subject to any restrictions, all such restrictions were observed [↑](#footnote-ref-1)