**Pipeline Program for Diversity in Independent News Media**

The Media Consortium proposes a partnership with the Maynard Institute to develop a pipeline program to support long-term diversity at the management level in independent media.

**The Problem**

Independent news media often can attract people of color to entry level positions. However, such outlets have difficulty retaining those staffers. This program is designed to support staffers of color in remaining at independent outlets (if they so choose).

At the Media Consortium, we recognize that independent news outlets will create a more diverse staff only when they commit to a strategy of racial equity. Outlets may well need to change much about their operations, from how much they pay to how they hire, in order to ensure a greater diversity of management staff. We are committed to working with outlets to become more equitable.

At the same time, we recognize that people of color can find the independent news sector particularly challenging to navigate, even when an outlet is moving towards racial equity. Independent outlets often have very small staffs and few if any support systems for staff. Pay is usually much lower at such outlets and often does not include basic benefits. Most of all, however, working for an independent outlet means connecting deeply with the outlet’s mission and niche audience, creating a culture that can be both more tight-knit but also more emotionally charged than that of a traditional news outlet.

Staff of color working for Media Consortium member outlets (and those of our peer associations) have requested a peer network to support them. As a result, we have created the TMCinColor network, an online community of over 50 staff of color that meet by video call once a quarter and in person once a year. However, we recognize that those individuals who seek to remain in the independent news space and grow into management positions need more mentoring than we can provide.

**The Program**

We propose building a mentorship program, in conjunction with the Maynard 200, to support staff of color who seek to become the next generation of independent news leaders.

Maynard and the Media Consortium will jointly select 5 staffers annually who will form their own subset within the larger Maynard 200 cohort. We will pair each staffer with a mentor—a person of color working in a managerial role at an independent news outlet.

Mentor and mentee will be brought together for a 2/3 day leadership retreat as part of the Maynard program. Like the Hollyhock Institute or the Rockwood Leadership Institute, this retreat will focus on leadership skills. As part of this retreat they will create statements about what they hope to learn and to achieve.

Thereafter, mentor and mentee will meet weekly on their own, with a monthly video call for all 10 mentors and mentees in the program. Every three months, that call will coincide with the TMCinColor video conference.

At the end of the year, mentors and mentees will meet again at the next year’s leadership retreat. They will pass on what they have learned to the next cohort of mentors and mentees, and reflect upon their statements from the previous year.

We will ask mentors and mentees to keep in touch and to continue to participate in quarterly TMCinColor calls. The hope will be that within a few years, mentees from this cohort will become mentors of cohorts to come.

**Benchmarks**

Recruit 5 mentees and 5 mentors each year

Aim for 80% of mentees to become media champions within a 5 year horizon

Aim for 60% of mentees to become leaders at independent news organizations within a 5 year horizon

After 5 years, aim for a 100% increase in leaders of color in independent news media.

**Funding Request**

Maynard: $$ for retreat programming and travel scholarships for attendees

TMC: $10,000 for program management, including recruiting mentors and mentees; pairing mentors and mentees; monitoring ongoing relationship between mentors and mentees; organizing quarterly TMCinColor calls

**Definition**

**Independent news sector** : This sector is comprised broadly of nonprofit news outlets and for-profit outlets that are mission-based and owned by those working directly at the outlets. Examples of independent outlets include members of AAN, NFCB, INN, the Media Consortium and the public access channels that belong to ACM. Many community-based outlets that serve people of color are also independent, like Latino Rebels, Vocalo in Chicago, or Brooklyn Deep.