The digital revolution did more than add a new publishing platform; the digital era has changed publishing’s revenue models, the marketplace, and audience expectations. As a result, publications that once served very different markets using very different platforms and revenue models now increasingly find their interests aligned. A rare opportunity presents itself for forward-thinking outlets like those in AAN and TMC to partner, sharing best practices around business and editorial models and benefiting from services now siloed within each organization.

An alliance between AAN and TMC would open up revenue possibilities for each. TMC, along with most of its outlets, is non-profit. TMC outlets can share best practices around converting readers into members and donors with AAN outlets. On a larger scale, we know foundation funders are hungry to strengthen local news and to bring more local news to national outlets. Small experiments like the AAN-TMC Plan B collaboration, which provided $30,000 to 9 AAN & TMC outlets to conduct local investigations of the rollout of the Plan B emergency contraceptive and then spread the results nationally, demonstrate the possibilities of foundation-funded collaborations.

AAN outlets are for-profit and ad-driven. AAN outlets can share their entrepreneurial agility with TMC outlets, with partnership opportunities around events and merchandise. On a larger scale, approximately half of the TMC outlets would be able to participate in AAN’s mobile ad network, which would not only bring income to them but expand and strengthen the network as a whole.

An AAN-TMC alliance would also increase services to all members. AAN offers an array of trade association services, from an annual circulation audit to legal services. TMC offers discounts on PR and marketing tools, and is on the cutting-edge of impact measurement research. Together, the associations could offer even more services, including enhanced technical support.

AAN and TMC do have different cultures. AAN outlets are local-first; TMC outlets tend to be regional and national. AAN outlets offer arts and culture; TMC outlets are news-only. However, a recent joint conference in February 2015 demonstrated that when it comes to the practice of journalism, both groups are on the same page. In fact, the chance to work across local/national boundaries, and the opportunity to marry long-form investigations with explainers and analysis, indicate the possiblities for forging a new kind of national journalism based on partnerships and collaboration.

Revenue, Services, Journalism—all will improve with an AAN-TMC partnership.