Today, when anyone with a computer, smartphone or tablet can access terrabites of data, simply reaching an audience is not enough. Media outlets must be able to cut through the noise: they must be able to create impact.

The Media Consortium, a national network of 59 progressive independent news outlets, is a leader in developing impact journalism. Unlike other media organizations, the Media Consortium is not a trade association. We are a mission-driven organization dedicated to support and grow the independent media sector. Our vision is to build a progressive infrastructure that has real power to inform, educate and engage the public on matters of public policy.

Our unique role gives us the ability to act as a connector between media organizations and between media and advocacy organizations. We are, as the Democracy Alliance recognized this year by adding us to their “map,” a critical element of the progressive infrastructure

In 2013, the Media Consortium will pursue three specific objectives to achieve our mission and vision:

**Foster Multimedia Collaboration**

Previous collaborations have demonstrated that we can leverage member outlets’ diverse media platforms to create deeper and more sustained audience engagement. This collaboration will draw on print, digital, radio, TV, film, book, and petition-driven media in order to engage the public around the issue of fracking. Our specific objectives will be to produce a special issue of Earth Island Journal; three Making Contact radio shows; two LinkTV shows; several short “viral-style” videos; and a book. Via these media, our objective is to create a shift in public discourse around fracking, measurable via the metrics tools the Consortium is simultaneously developing.

We will also, during the course of the year, continue other types of collaborative work, including our Media Policy Reporting and Education Project.

**Give Voice to the Grassroots**

A year-long engagement with the Occupy movement has convinced us that the best way to build and diversify media leadership is to develop community journalists. To that end, we plan to launch a Community Journalism Training Institute that will develop activists into community journalists, creating a direct path from information to action.

**Create a Network of Networks**

Outlets join the Media Consortium because they know they can’t survive in this media climate on their own. Increasingly, progressive advocacy and policy organizations are realizing they too cannot thrive without working more closely with progressive media. The challenge is to construct a network that brings these organizations together while preserving key progressive values of independence and diversity. The Consortium is uniquely situated to perform this delicate work, as we are mission-driven to protect our sector’s independence but also to foster its impact.

The key forum for building this network of networks will be our Media Policy Reporting and Education Project. Having already succeeded in building a network linking media policy experts to journalists, we now plan to expand this project. In 2013 we will bring together advocates from campaign finance, environmental justice and criminal justice organizations with media policy advocates and independent media outlets in an effort to amplify the impact of each sector.

**Key Tactic: Build a Tool for Measuring Impact**

Along with these three objectives, the Consortium is developing a tool that will help us measure success. With the assistance of Professor Gary King, we are experimenting with a metrics tool that will measure whether our editorial collaborations have an impact on social narratives. For example, this tool will help us answer the question: how can we measure whether our fracking collaboration actually changes the conversation about fracking?

By the end of the year, we hope to achieve these specific mission-based benchmarks:

* Make measurable progress on the development of a metrics tool;
* Launch a multimedia collaboration around hydrofracturing consisting of 10 pieces on a full range of multimedia platforms including print magazine, website, radio, TV, video and book.
* Continue an ongoing media policy collaboration around the intersection of media policy and campaign finance (Citizens United);
* Launch a media policy collaboration around the intersection of media policy and criminal justice;
* Launch the Community Journalism Training Institute
* Develop closer ties to other independent media organizations, specifically INN, AAN, ACM and NFCB;
* Develop closer ties to advocacy organizations, especially those in the realms of media policy, environmental justice, and criminal justice

In addition to these programs and objectives, the Media Consortium will continue current programs that have produced measurable success, including:

* Developing a diverse media leadership through an equitable membership program;
* Supporting current members through monthly “how it works” webinars;
* Developing our internal network through our annual meeting, regional meetings, and our listservs;
* Developing a culture of mutual support and collaboration through an ongoing program of social media cross-promotion;
* Produce an annual online collaborative fundraiser
* Hold an annual meeting in Baltimore, along with regional meetings.