



Final Report: Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Project
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The Media Consortium (TMC) launched the Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Program (MPREPP) in April, 2011 with the support of the Benton Foundation, William Penn Foundation, and the Media and Democracy Fund.

The 4-month pilot enabled TMC staff to educate reporters on media policy, from mobile regulation to the Universal Service Fund. It also provided seed money to independent press media outlets to support the production of high-impact reporting on media policy. The program's goals were twofold: To raise media policy issues to a new level of public awareness by supporting quality reporting and efficient content delivery to a diverse set of constituencies, and to provide reporters with access to concrete tools and experts who could help inform their reporting.

The pilot program, nearing its conclusion, has been a success. The nine participating media outlets—AlterNet, New American Media, the New York Community Media Alliance, The G.W. Williams Center for Independent Journalism, Mother Jones, Truthout, GritTV, Feet in Two Worlds and Public News Service—have produced over 80 deeply reported pieces on media policy, along with a biweekly roundup blog, "The Wavelength." Reporters involved in the process believe the program provided tools, sources and education that made a significant difference to their ability to report on the topic:

"MPREPP gave Truthout the opportunity to uncover and analyze an untapped portion of the country's ever-evolving political landscape. Through our involvement with MPREPP, we were able to help shed light on the often-ignored intersection of media and politics that is essential to a functioning democracy."

—Nadia Prupis, Media Policy Reporting Fellow, Truthout.

Project Outcomes

Over 80 original researched and reported stories were written during this pilot. This content is influencing the public debate over media policy. Here are a few highlights:

- **Feet in 2 Worlds** is producing a segment for NPR's The World on how young immigrants are using social media to organize around the DREAM Act. The story will air in late July/early August. The story demonstrates that the political use of social media via mobile is as relevant to people in the U.S. as it is to the Egyptians of this spring's

uprising, and how this significant use of media for free speech could be impacted by media consolidation.

- **AlterNet** is running a 5-part series on how corporate media consolidation has directly impacted citizens and consumers. Former telecom industry insiders Bruce Kushnick and David Rosen author the series.
- **Truthout** produced investigative stories on a number of under-reported topics, from the potential widespread effects of the AT&T/T-Mobile merger to the fight for stronger legal protections for bloggers. Over the course of three months, they published 20 articles that regularly received hundreds of shares through Facebook and Twitter. Media Policy fellow Nadia Prupis' final article, which studied the implications of Apple filing a patent for software that could remotely disable an iPhone camera, was shared by a combined 3,195 people on social media.
- **G.W. Williams Center for Independent Journalism**, in partnership with **New America Media**, published a two-part investigation into how Low Power TV stations provide vital services to ethnic communities—but are being given short shrift by the FCC. This story is helping connect LPTV providers around the country. “Joseph Orozco of KIDE ... contacted us about the low-power TV story, and [Wavelength blogger and author] Eric Arnold put him in touch with Ravi Kapur of KAXT-TV. Just the kind of connection a New America Media story should make.” –Paul Kleyman, Editor, New America Media.

In addition to the stories produced, the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project has helped build connections between independent media outlets and media policy experts. Every three weeks, TMC staff arranged content-rich conference calls for MPREPP participants with experts from organizations including Free Press, the New American Foundation, Prometheus Radio Project, Media Mobilizing Project, Native Public Media, and the Center for Media Justice. These organizations are eager to continue the project, as they appreciate this ongoing means to communicate with the independent press. In fact, Free Press is attending our annual meeting in Oakland this October to continue building communications relationships with TMC members.

Quantitative Results:

- **Education:** The Media Consortium organized four briefing calls between Media Consortium members and media policy experts in order to train and educate members about the future of media industry (see Appendix A). To ensure that these rich resources are well-used, the Media Consortium created a database of experts on media policy matters as a reference for all members.
- **Reporting:** The Media Consortium redistributed funds ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000 to seven organizations finance reporting on media policy over a three-month period. The selected organizations represent a diversity of platforms and constituents. Each organization receiving funding published a mixture of breaking and deeper investigative

stories. All told, participating organizations have published over 80 pieces of content focused on the many facets of media policy. (Complete list of stories attached)

- **Distribution:** Participating Media Consortium members reached a combined online audience of 1.7 million people during this project (these numbers represent monthly average unique visitors documented by Compete.com). The Media Consortium also used social media to push out these pieces, and encouraged other members to cross post the pieces through their Twitter and Facebook feeds. Public News Service was able to localize and release 88 audio pieces which were picked up by a minimum of 1,756 radio outlets around the country, reaching an audience of over 11 million, with over 5,000 additional downloads of said stories from their public website.
- **Context:** The Media Consortium created a dedicated biweekly blog, The Wavelength, to aggregate media policy stories produced by members, as well as reports from other outlets. TMC published nine editions of the Wavelength, one more than stipulated in our program pitch. We add the extra round up blog to capture the NewsCorp scandal and FCC recommendations for rulemaking on LPFM. The blog was free for any organization to reprint. We saw around 140 total reprints of the blog across our network. Between 10-15 orgs picked it up on a regular basis.

Qualitative Results:

- Publishers/Producers of independent media gained a clearer understanding of how media policy would impact their own organizations.
- Significant and lasting connections were forged between policy organizations and independent media organizations. For example, as a result of this project Public News Service has worked with the Prometheus Radio Project to produce two new stories on how FCC policy is impacting radio listeners.
- Journalists have a new understanding of how media policy directly impacts ordinary Americans, and citizens responded: “We had a big traffic increase at Mother Jones. People really care about these issues. One story I’m particularly proud of is Kate Shephard’s piece on Climategate-- how the media responded and amplified it. That story got picked up in all usual places, plus it was taken seriously by people in the global climate change skeptic community. They may not have agreed with the takeaway but a lot read it. [It was an] unexpected and pleasant surprise.” Nick Baumann, Associate Editor, Mother Jones.

Evaluation

The MREPP project achieved its goal of raising media policy issues to a new level of public awareness by supporting quality reporting and efficient content delivery to a diverse set of constituencies. The 9 organizations involved in MREPP represented diverse constituencies, ranging from the foreign-language immigrant press represented by GWW/New American Media/NYCMA to the largely rural and local audience represented by radio broadcaster Public News Service.

By supporting journalists with four content-rich conference calls, plus a resource guide, the Media Consortium enabled journalists to better grasp the implications of media policy and to create deeper, more provocative stories. These critically important pieces about media policy were then distributed via the full range of media technology, from print to radio to video, from websites to blogs to social media.

Challenges

While the number of stories, degree of collaboration and connection to allies in media policy exceeded our expectations, TMC staff did encounter a few key challenges that will inform future program planning. Here are a few of our challenges—and how we plan to/have worked around them:

- **Tracking technology.** As this program wraps, TMC staff are spending significant time hunting down analytics and traffic data from program participants. There's simply no easy way to gather hard data from a variety of websites that use different analytics platforms. For future efforts, TMC is looking into creating a tracking pixel system similar to that used by ProPublica. The pixel would be embedded in any content related to the program and would report traffic back to a centralized TMC analytics dashboard. This would give us an honest assessment of pageviews in house as the project was in motion and staff would not have to go across multiple organizations and analytics portals to reconstruct this data.
- **Organizational and other emergencies.** We faced two major changeups during this program: GritTV ceased daily operations and a reporter for NAM/GWW had a family emergency that required them to miss deadlines. Thankfully, we were able to reach successful workarounds for each situation. GritTV partnered with FreeSpeechTV to produce a number of tech and media policy-focused segments at Netroots Nation and the NAM/GWW reporter has been granted an extension to finish producing copy through August. For future collaborative efforts, TMC will be asking participating organizations to sign a memorandum of understanding that includes a backup plan in case such crises arise.

Conclusion:

MPREPP, as a pilot program, underscored The Media Consortium's ability to foster strong editorial collaborations among members and between members and policy-driven foundations. The success of this project is helping The Media Consortium plan for future collaborative opportunities to educate the public. TMC is now seeking funding for a full roll out of this program that will build upon the learnings from our pilot project.

Appendix A: Media Policy Briefing Calls

What is the Future of Broadband? Plus: NCMR Planning

When: Thursday, March 31

Part One: Broadband

Reliable, speedy Internet access has become a central issue that impacts education, employment, and more. But conversations about "access" are often mired in technojargon and difficult to parse. How can we better connect broadband policy to its impact on the ground? This call will map the future of broadband policy via proposed updates to the Universal Service Fund. We'll also take a look at how communities are organizing to stay connected in the digital age. There will be time for Q+A with guests.

Guests:

Amina Fazlullah, Policy Counsel, Benton Foundation.

Bryan Mercer, Digital Inclusion Director and Web Strategist, Media Mobilizing Project.

Part Two: Planning for NCMR

What you need to know to organize coverage at Free Press' National Conference for Media Reform.

Jennifer Ettinger, Media Coordinator for Free Press, will give an overview of the conference, opportunities for reporting, and tracks to follow. Eric Galatas, Program Director at Free Speech TV, will talk through FSTV's plans for coverage of the conference and outline opportunities for reporters to step in and collaborate in producing content for air.

What Will They Consolidate Next? An In-Depth Look at Future Trends in Media Consolidation

When: Friday, May 13

During this call, we'll review the impact of media consolidation in newsrooms and communities around the country. How will the media landscape change if the AT&T/T-Mobile Merger is greenlighted? What has changed since the Comcast/NBC merger was approved? What exactly is covert consolidation?

Part 1: Vertical Consolidation--What's on the last mile?

Matt Wood of the Media Access Project will give an overview of current trends towards vertical consolidation--and what MAP is doing to prevent it. We'll also discuss the review process for the AT&T/T-Mobile Merger and how the Comcast/NBC merger is impacting programming.

Part 2: Covert Consolidation 101

Josh Stearns of Free Press will reveal how covert consolidation is impacting communities and media organizations around the country.

Part 3: Break 'em up...Again

Bruce Kushnik, a telecommunications industry analyst and a founding member of Teletruth, a customer advocacy group, will talk about about a new campaign to break up communication trusts.

Net Neutrality Vs. The Mobile Web

When: Monday, June 20

What's new in the fight for Net Neutrality—and how does the mobile web fit into the conversation? During this call, we'll explore the ongoing impact of net neutrality on various communities, how

advocacy groups are organizing for change, and the challenges of organizing around these issues. We'll also look at a few case studies of on the ground organizing from New Mexico.

Part 1: Net Neutrality's impact on communities of color

Jamilah King has been reporting about Net Neutrality for Colorlines.com for the last year and a half. She'll discuss how NN issues impact communities of color, what she's learned during that time, and what issues she will be watching in the coming months.

Part 2: Why does mobile matter?

amalia deloney, Grassroots Policy Director for the Center for Media Justice, will discuss how the challenges and opportunities grassroots organizations are encountering as they campaign for a just communications infrastructure, particularly in regards to the mobile web.

Part 3: Organizing on the ground

Laura Montoya, campaign coordinator for the Media Literacy Project, will discuss how connectivity issues impact New Mexico's citizens. She'll also give an overview of the work MLP is doing to confront these issues.

The Future of Radio

When: July 6, 2011

What's next in the battle for community radio, and what can we expect from the FCC in the weeks to come? For this call, we'll be looking at the future of radio and the communities that are most impacted by low power and full power FM policy.

Guests:

Brandy Doyle, Prometheus Radio

Megan Sheehan, Vermont Workers' Center

Dr. Traci L. Morris, Native Public Media

Part 1: What's next in the fight for LPFM?

Now that the local community radio act has been passed, what's next in the fight for LPFM? Brandy Doyle of Prometheus Radio Project discussed how a pending FCC decision over the last remaining open channels in urban areas could impact communities around the country. Megan Sheehan of the Vermont Workers' Center shared concrete stories of impact from VWC's LPFM station.

Part 2: Radio Policy and Native American Communities

How does LPFM--and full power FM--regulation and policy impact Native American communities? Dr. Traci L. Morris of Native Public Media gave an overview of key policy concerns to this unique constituency and discussed how Native Media outlets are organizing for change.