The purpose of this grant is to support bringing 10 journalists of color to the Media Consortium’s annual conference taking place March 1-4, 2017 in Washington DC at the Washington Court Hotel.

The Media Consortium is a network of 80 independent news outlets organized to support the independent news sector. In 2016 we made a commitment as an organization and a network to racial equity, setting a goal that at least 50% of our speakers and 50% of our conference attendees would be journalists of color.

This year, our conference will use a participatory format with a specific objective: to grapple with a crisis in journalism by assessing the threats independent news outlets face and the opportunities they can seize. Our aim is to build a news media system that puts communities at its center.

Having a significant number of journalists of color participate in this conversation is critical. For too long, mass media and independent news organizations alike have disregarded communities of color, not only as a source of employees or as the subject of our reporting, but also as communities ready to engage with journalists to tell their own stories.

Now we see that the mistakes we made with these communities are ones we replicated with rural and suburban dwellers as well. By learning with journalists who come from communities of color, we together can better develop practices that engage a wide variety of different kinds of communities.

We already have at least 20 journalists of color registered to attend our conference. Providing travel grants to an additional 10 journalists will help ensure we have a significant cohort of journalists of color to participate in conversations that will impact the future of independent news.