

**Submitted by: The Media Consortium, a project of the Foundation for National Progress**

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**Final Report on the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project**

**Summary**

The primary aim of the Media Policy Reporting and Education Project is to increase reporting of media policy issues by training reporters in the media policy beat. The vision of the project is to build trust between reporters, media outlets, policy advocates, and grassroots activists in order to open up a pathway for creating the kind of impact that leads to real, lasting social change.

In 2012, the Media Consortium faced challenges recruiting reporters to the field, but we had measurable success in training reporters, bringing together a network of media policy experts, and creating impact in the media policy field.

*Briefings are really helpful for giving reporters a starting point to go out and gather more data.  I’ve seen the impact in the final reports—Alice Ollstein, FSRN*

*Being able to call up the experts has helped; I’ve been able to learn the ins and outs of these issues, esp. the political files for television and the wireless deals—I didn’t realize how broad an impact that issue was—Mike Ludwig, Truthout*

**Evaluation**

Quantitative Benchmarks:

* 5 outlets participated in MPREP: FSRN, Oakland Local, In These times, Public News Service, Truthout
* 6 reporters were trained through MPREP: Barbara Grady and Irene Florez (OL), Alice Ollstein (FSRN), Ken Rapoza (IIT), Mark Scheerer (PNS), Mike Ludwig (Truthout)
* 12 Briefings were held in 2012
* 37 Feature stories produced plus 38 story versions from PNS

In 2012, the MPREP program was not able to meet certain basic quantitative benchmarks. We had hoped to recruit 12-13 outlets, and thus produce 72 feature stories and 100+ briefs. Because we were only able to recruit 5 outlets, we only expected to produce 30 feature stories—we exceeded that amount, producing 37 feature stories and 43 briefs. The poor recruitment was a blip, as in 2013 we have recruited 10 outlets. One reason outlets gave us for not participating was the recession—reporter resources were very tightly controlled and allocated in 2012.

In the original grant, the Media Consortium had asked for $75,000, in part to help pay for a part-time staffer to create briefings and develop the media policy database. We are grateful for the $30,000 grant we received, but without additional resources we were unable to create the database. We did, however, create 12 original media policy briefings, attended by an average of 8 reporters each (the briefings were open to all reporters). See Attachment “MPREP Webinars 2012” for a list of briefings.

We did provide reporters and outlets with the pixel ping in order to measure click thrus, and we have some prelimary data on that (Appendix I and II). Without the extra Media Consortium administrative staff, however, we were not able to keep a close eye on use of this tracking device. Again, this was an infrastructure need that we could not meet. We also realized that two of our outlets produce primarily for radio: website measurements thus are very inaccurate for these outlets.

Qualitative Benchmarks

One key goal for the project’s first full year was to increase and deepen our relationships with media policy organizations. Over the course of 2012, we began to see qualitative indicators of that vision becoming a reality.

We developed strong working relationships with 12 media policy organizations: Center for Media Justice, Color of Change, Consumers Union, EFF, Free Press, National Hispanic Media Coalition, Native Public Media, New America Foundation, Prometheus, Public Citizen, Public Knowledge and the Center for Rural Strategies. Staff at these organizations agreed to mentor individual reporters, and helped shape as well as participate in briefings. For example, Rebecca Jeschke at EFF told us that her colleague, Hanni Fakhoury, would be able to provide a briefing on warrantless searches.

We also were able to facilitate networking among the media policy experts themselves—critical since the death of MADCO. For example, Parul Desai, then at Consumers Union, and Edyael Casperalta at Center for Rural Strategies teamed up to give us a briefing on the Verizon deal. We hope to facilitate more connections among experts and between experts and reporters, in the future.

What was truly exciting was watching as reporting and activism converged on issues like CISPA, LPFM, prison phones, and FCC regulations on broadcast disclosure. In these arenas, activists like amada deloney noted that reported stories made an impact:

*Being able to work directly with journalists and independent media to frame media policy stories as human interest or social justice deepens and broadens our reach and impact. Whether on the issues of prison phones, or the potential impacts of cuts to the low income programs of the Universal Service fund, we were able to help journalists shape a story that described the real harm in understandable terms that didn't bury the story in a hard to access tech blog.—*amalia deloney, Center for Media Justice

**One Experiment**

In the fall of 2012, we experimented with creating a collaboration among all 5 outlets around a media policy topic. The reporters chose to report on FCC rules around broadcast disclosure of advertising dollars—in particular, they were excited about the Free Press campaign to track political campaign cash.

Reporters chose to focus on Ohio, a battleground state, and researched data collected by Free Press and others. They put the data together, and TMC paid one reporter, Irene Florez, to create an infographic for us. Ken Rapoza ended up publishing the story for In These Times.

The reporters were eager and willing to collaborate, but the result did not meet our expectations. Looking back, we probably chose the wrong story—it was one already well covered by other media. We also needed a story that would have multiple angles, so that each reporter could own a piece of it. We will be trying to implement this kind of collaboration in the future, taking what we have learned into account.

**One Story**

Ken Rapoza is typical of many reporters. He got into journalism to make a difference, but he also needs to pay the bills, so he works full-time at Forbes, writing a column titled “BRIC Breaker,” covering business news in Brazil, Russia, India and China. For himself, he works part-time at In These Times, writing a monthly column on the news business.

Ken applied to the Media Policy Reporting Project to get material for his In These Times column. What he found was a whole new  beat:

*The Media Consortium program opened my eyes to the wider concern of media policy analysts and media policy in general. Whereas I used to consider it more related to news gathering and the impacts of big media on the content and idea landscape, now I am thinking more about the tools and equipment used to transfer media, be it low powered FM to the tightly policed social networking sites that people use to discuss news and politics. Overall, this TMC grant gave me a chance to look broader at media policy in this country.* -- Kenneth Rapoza, columnist, In These Times

Ken wrote on media consolidation, internet privacy, low power fm, and broadcast disclosure in 2012, and applied to continue in the program for 2013.